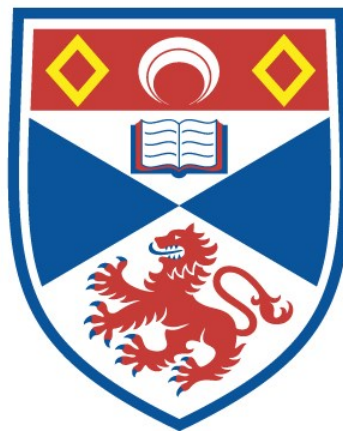


THE WAY OF THE UNFINISHED: APPROACHING MIGRANT LIVES IN SÃO PAULO THROUGH RESONANCE

Simone Toji

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews**



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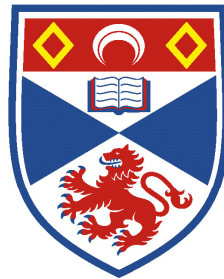
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The way of the unfinished: Approaching migrant lives in
São Paulo through resonance

Simone Toji



University of
St Andrews

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews

19 October 2016

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Department of Social Anthropology

Ethics Reference No: <i>Please quote this ref on all correspondence</i>	SA10048
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Researchers Name(s):	Simone Sayuri Takahashi Toji
Supervisor(s):	Professor Nigel Rapport

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ABSTRACT

In following several international migrants in the city of São Paulo, I found that inarticulate moments of hesitation, uncertainty, or suspension punctuated their trajectories. These fleeting and subtle instances revealed that people's lives were pervaded by a certain 'messiness' that pointed out the limits of understanding life and the world through scientific standards of generalisation and coherence.

Requiring a different attitude concerning the making of anthropology, 'messiness' compelled my ethnographic account to admit that: firstly, people, places and situations, held a 'mystery' that my efforts of scientific disclosure could never clarify completely; secondly, each attempt at living in the world became a very singular experimentation.

In order to ethnographically do justice to the 'mystery' and 'singularity' I found in the lives I followed in São Paulo, this account found in Levinas's work inspiration to develop a phenomenological approach. This phenomenological approach combined two movements. The first movement searched for a way of incorporating the faltering occasions of inarticulacy in people's lives through imagination, signalling the limits of understanding these lives through objective knowledge, and proposing to appreciate them through processes of human recognition. This procedure was crafted as a 'poetics of resonance', an aesthetic operation converting lived experience into written expression in a way that imagination can offer a sense of what it is to live a particular life or experience in its richness. The second movement in this phenomenological approach refers to the recognition of a human life in its singularity, attempting to substantiate it ethnographically in the form of particular 'life-journeys', which is an approximation to what Levinas described as 'uniqueness'.

As follows, seven specific life-journeys are presented, organised as 'journeys of being', 'in-between journeys', and 'journeys of becoming', according to the elements of affiliation each research participant stressed in their respective course shared with me.

From the richness of these ethnographic particulars, insights for migration and urban studies were derived from the phenomenological approach undertaken. The ethnographic evidence questioned a sense of complexity based on categorisations in migration studies and suggested that for the life-journeys portrayed a concept of immensity is more appropriate than a concept of identity. Concerning theories about the urban, the mobility manifested by the life-journeys in São Paulo and beyond conveyed, not a city of ethnic neighbourhoods, but a city of 'rough' experimentation, according to people's positionality and their ability to find their own ways in the city and in the world.

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There are no sufficient words to convey the importance of all those who contributed to this whole endeavour.

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I wish to also thank Mark Harris for the conversations over literature on anthropology in Brazil and for his kindness in presenting to me the Brazil I was not accustomed to experience.

My sincere thanks to the Centre for Cosmopolitan Centre (CCS), in the person of Huon Wardle, its director, for the essential environment that provided the feeling that I belonged to a research commonality in the University of St Andrews.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures & Tables	7
Acronyms & Abbreviations	9
Where to begin	11
Part I	
Chapter 1 - The Poetics of Resonance: A phenomenological experiment in anthropology through imagination	23
1.1 Life-in-the-making: on uncertainty and moments of (...)	23
1.2 On experience and consciousness: towards a phenomenological approach	26
1.3 Aesthetics as a phenomenological way of knowing	30
1.4 The poetics of resonance: an experiment	32
Chapter 2 - Life-journeys and singularity	45
2.1 Ethnographic emergences of infinite faces	45
2.2 Methodological irreducibility through cosmopolitanism	47
2.3 Uniqueness, singularity and life-journeys	49
2.4 Life-journeys, experience and instability	50
Part II	
Chapter 3 - Journeys of being	57
3.1 With Mr. Kwon	59
3.2 With Mrs. Lee	71
3.3 With Kitty	77

Chapter 4 - In-be(ing)tween journeys.....	91
4.1 With Julieta	93
4.2 With Mr. Soh	109
Chapter 5 - Journeys of becoming	121
5.1 With Liu	123
5.2 With Helen	131
Part III	
Chapter 6 - Life-journeys and migration studies	149
6.1 Disturbing categories	151
6.2 Complexity at play.....	152
6.3 From multiplicity to complexity: towards immensity.....	154
6.4 Existences in migration	159
Chapter 7 - Journeys in the city of São Paulo	161
7.1 Migrants and places	163
7.2 Bom Retiro and beyond	164
7.3 Ethnicity at play: brief encounters in the overwhelming city.....	170
7.4 Mobilities in the open-ended city.....	174
7.5 Finding your own way in the city	176
7.6 The gambiarra city	178
And then.....	187
References	193

LIST OF FIGURES & TABLES

Figure 1 - 'Gambiarra' on electricity post in Bom Retiro. Simone Toji-2014	182
Table 1- Simplified diagram of the Acosta family	101
Table 2 - Life-journeys and places of circulation	165
Table 3 - Activities and motives of circulation in the life-journeys.....	167

ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

BNH: *Programa Banco Nacional de Habitação*, National Housing Bank Program

CEAGESP: *Companhia de Entrepósitos e Armazéns Gerais de São Paulo*, General Warehouses of São Paulo Company

IBGE: *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística*, Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics

IBOPE: *Instituto Brasileiro de Opinião Pública e Estatística*, Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics

IPEA: *Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada*, Institute for Applied Economic Research

SEADE: *Fundação Sistema Estadual de Análise de Dados*, Foundation State System for Data Analysis

WHERE TO BEGIN

Caucaia do Alto, Cotia, Brazil – 12 January 2015

We were both sat on the veranda, enjoying the freshness of the garden foliage in the warm summer day. Julieta sprawled out her legs and arms, confiding that she loved to spend her weekends with Mario and the kids in that garden. The projections for her husband's business were not altogether positive, but she did not have much to complain about. When they were short of money, they took pleasure in merely being together in the garden, playing with their children and the dogs. That was a simple joy that she did not expect would be so precious. She was not sure about their future. Maybe they would sell the house and join her parents in Quillacollo. Julieta and her husband did not know exactly how their lives would be in the coming years but that was not an anguishing problem. Then, in her usual affectionate manner, she would inquire of me, *Y vos? Qué vas a hacer en el Reino Unido? Qué vas a escribir en tu tesis?*¹

¹ Spanish: And how about you? What are you going to do in the United Kingdom? What are you going to write about in your thesis?

These were questions I did not know how to answer when Julieta posed them to me. The same puzzlement Julieta faced regarding her future life, I was, too, regarding my own. At that moment, I was about to leave Brazil, officially marking an end to my fieldwork period. I did not even know that Julieta was to be included as 'research participant' in the thesis to come.

At that point, I did not have a clue about how my field experiences were to consolidate into a doctoral thesis. Fieldwork was a million things, except a revelation. With a proposal of studying international migrants living in the neighbourhood of Bom Retiro, São Paulo, I engaged inexhaustibly with numerous people and activities in search of that moment in which everything would make sense. I enrolled myself in sewing classes, as the economic engine in the area was said to be the garment industry. I became an employee in a local flower shop and a restaurant owned by migrants from South Korea. I volunteered myself to support a migrant women's social movement and to teach basic Portuguese for non-Brazilians in a public school in Bom Retiro. I also attended classes to learn Korean and tried to establish relationships with my neighbours in Bom Retiro as well. Through such diverse types of commitments², I had the opportunity to travel to Bolivia and South Korea following some of the research participants in their own movements.

By the end of 16 months of fieldwork, from September 2013 to January 2015, no encompassing form of explanation had arisen. The people I followed and the experiences I attended to seemed scattered and at times disjointed from one another. Everything together constituted an aggregated mass and I bore the feeling that I returned from fieldwork with empty hands.

Back at the University of St Andrews, colleagues and staff warmly welcomed me and constantly asked how fieldwork was. I could not prevent myself from repeating, *It was messy, it was messy*. Not only did the profusion of multiple involvements that did not necessarily converge on the same reference point contribute to this sense of messiness, but I realised that amassing a great amount of information and details from a person or a situation did not guarantee any easy way to know them – or anything - entirely.

This thesis is about this failure.

A way out (or a way in?)

No scheme, no structure, no big picture emerged by itself from fieldwork. Actually, every person or happening I encountered provoked the uneasy impression that there was, at all times, something I could not grasp. People and the events animated by them often generated the feeling that it was me not knowing sufficiently everything I should. There was always this mystery in each person and in each

² Consideration on the multiple subjective aspects composing these experiences as ethnographer will not be developed in the thesis, nonetheless I follow Narayan(1993) in this matter.

occasion: an insistence on reiterating that the closer one gets, the more distant one is. People in their peculiar ways of being-in-the-world puzzled me profoundly.

What moved me the most in these migrants' stories that I had the opportunity to follow was realising that life itself was, in fact, a mess. Life was never smooth certainty: it was a constant striving and a continual source of tribulation. And what intrigued me the most was observing these discrepant instances in someone's manners or the moments of indecision and suspension in which they were suddenly held. In these incidents, sometimes not clearly articulated, I could feel that something very intense was happening in order to make life keep going.

In the helpless circumstances of fieldwork, the only way I found to deal with this mystery that people insistently presented to me was to write short fictional pieces about it. In writing these fictional fragments, sometimes just snapshots, I did not reach any redemption in truth or understanding. It was more about making visible to myself the research limitations I came across. At the same time, it was how I could express my reverence towards these unique lives that existed beyond simplification, in their own richness. This personal exercise actually was not meant to be integrated with the research proceedings.

However, after six months of rummaging through field materials, generating futile writing-up pieces, and the attentive and sensitive encouraging from my supervisor, I emboldened myself to take seriously this alternative way of unlocking people's lives, as this was the process which I trusted to maintain the integrity of those lives in their own mystery. In trying to immerse myself in their mystery, I did not attain any illuminated explanation of them, but this allowed me to be irrevocably open to the mess these lives insistently pointed out to me, a mess that more than ever I myself could sense it in my own research situation.

As a consequence, this thesis consolidates my attempts to understand this expansion of horizons of consideration by writing imaginative pieces: writing that enabled me to include what is incoherent and messy in the lives of international migrants living in the city of São Paulo as sensitive information for research purposes. I call this procedure a 'poetics of resonance'. In considering this process as a possibility to engage with academic debates, I became aware that it called for a dialogue with phenomenological, pragmatist and existentialist reflections in philosophy as well as anthropology. As Desjarlais and Throop emphasise, 'phenomenological approaches, broadly conceived, can get at the richness of people's lives, concerns, and engagements in direct and incisive terms' that are able to provide 'compelling accounts of particular lived realities' (2011:97).

In this way, I found that the core motive of this thesis is to venture into the ground of Levinas' radical alterity of the Other. Here, the afore-mentioned 'mystery' of people can gain purchase and be taken, indeed, as a productive epistemological element in understanding and engaging with the human world to which I was exposed. Rapport proposes an anthropology through Levinas in which the mystery of the other is an opportunity to understand the 'plurality of existence' not as manifestation of a politics of identity, but as an aspiration for what is beyond holistic conceptualizations (2015:260), and I follow this path. In this regard, 'respect for otherness is based on

ignorance more than on knowledge: the relevance of ignorance is that it undermines not only myth and the conceptual and cultural but also the possibility of having other than an intimation of the absolute plurality of existence' (Rapport 2015:261).

In finding a grounding in Levinas' work, the specific aspects relating to a poetics of resonance - as a phenomenological procedure through imagination – achieve their methodological significance, together with imports from Bergson, Dilthey, Dewey and Bakhtin. To clarify the intentions and scope of this phenomenological approach, the richness of ethnographic particulars was made substantial through its application, and alternative insights for urban and migration studies could also be suggested.

The imperfect science

Malinowski (1932) established fieldwork as a foundational method in anthropology seeking to guarantee a scientific standard for the discipline. Although procedures such as participant observation could be shown to be a distinctive anthropological contribution to a scientific paradigm, in the influential chapter on method in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, Malinowski also exhorted anthropologists to adopt practices from other classic sciences, such as the observation of 'laws and regularities of cultural phenomena' (1932:10), and the 'method of reducing information into charts and synoptic tables' (1932:14). In doing so, anthropologists were able to grasp the 'skeleton of tribal constitution' (1932:17). Politically, this was a bold move as it provided rationality and coherence to people still considered 'savages'. Yet, as Malinowski himself asserted, this schematization of people's lives would always lack 'flesh and blood' (1932:17); whereas the 'method of statistic documentation by concrete evidence' (1932: 17) aimed to find 'the skeleton' of a specific society, the 'small incidents' that constituted society's 'flesh and blood' were considered as 'imponderabilia of actual life' (1932:20). The former 'objective' documentation was a necessary procedure that the ethnographer should incorporate to certify the investigation as objective, while the latter was not fundamental in the same way. The 'imponderabilia of actual life' did not impart scientificity to the ethnographer's work - its best practitioners were the non-anthropological traders, missionaries and officials of the colonial administration. In short, at its inception, the procedures of fieldwork were already split between forms that achieved the 'skeleton' and those less-than-scientific means that constituted the 'flesh and blood' of the collective life³.

After Malinowski, anthropology established itself as a consolidated field of study, but 'the imponderabilia of actual life' – the trivialities that enriched life but could not deliver a proper knowledge of it - remained a realm in which anthropology's scope was continually contested. During

³ Malinowski also mentioned the dimension of 'spirit', which could be reached through extensive work on local categorisation.

the 'writing culture' debates (Clifford and Marcus 1986, Marcus and Fischer 1986, Behar and Gordon 1995), anthropology had to come to grips with its own modes of representation and ways of writing about and engaging with research participants. No overarching narrative or scientific authority in the discipline was free from scrutiny - Malinowski's functionalism included (Geertz 1988 and Clifford 1986). From 'the imponderabilia of actual life' - a dimension largely overlooked in the past, but maintaining itself as that grit in the disciplinary oyster - proposals for establishing new grounds for exploration in anthropology emerged.

Subjectivity came to be one of these crucial nodes to be developed. Relying on feminist critique and psychoanalysis theories, Moore claimed that anthropology needed 'a theory of the subject (...) that allows us to focus on the multiple constitution of subjectivity and on the agency of the subject in that process' (2007:17). Within this framework, the single subject could not be equated with the single individual or be reduced to discourse and determination by the social, because 'desire', 'fantasy', and 'unconscious motivation' were constituent elements that allowed the subject to take up different positions and be multiple. In the inner life of subjects, there were more things between the individual and society, between psyche and culture, than had been dreamt of before. Strathern (1988) brought to light forms of subjectivity from Melanesia that were simultaneously intersubjective. The idea of the 'distributed person' accounted for a personal presence that existed only in relation to others, manifested through names, titles and objects referenced within a particular group of people.

Still on the theme subjectivity-intersubjectivity, the body was another battle ground in which anthropology debated a shift from a knowledge based on assumptions of 'objective' standards to transgressive understandings of relations between nature and culture, or between representation and perception. For instance, whereas Haraway (1991) enlarged intersubjectivity through considerations on technology and interspecies relations, Csordas (1994) derived an understanding of intersubjectivity from phenomenological philosophy, based mainly on Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. The echoes of the 'writing culture' critique on modes of representation were still resounding, leading to the criticism of approaches that considered the body as an object in which culture or society was instilled - as if the body was an element pertaining to the realm of nature. Claims to go beyond the body-mind or nature-culture divides were urged and new scholarly projects for anthropology were proposed through technology and interspecies relations (Haraway 1991), technology and relations with the material world (Latour 1993), emotions (Lutz and White 1986 and Rosaldo 1989), and phenomenological concerns with 'existence' and 'being-in-world' (Csordas 1994 and Jackson 1996), to mention just a few.

The unleashed de-construction of previous representations and concepts in anthropology (Ingold 1996 and Wagner 1981), such as culture and society, was accompanied by the exhaustion of working references in hermeneutics, discourse and semiotics, which questioned the scientific standards of anthropology itself. In exploring the case of metaphors, Fernandez acknowledged the presence of gaps in language that led to 'weakness' and 'vacancy' in human understanding, arguing that 'the referential value of language, its ability to provide us with an accurate, transparent view

through to and mapping of the reality of things (...) is profoundly questioned' (1991:1). Pesmen (1991) pushed forward this claim by identifying that in the arts and the sciences, the abomination of 'mixed metaphors' sustained in fact the belief in a 'reality' that was able to provide 'coherence' and 'unity' for conceptions of formal structures, systems and scientific paradigms.

Going back to Malinowski terminology, 'the imponderabilia of actual life' had always been acknowledged as part and parcel of anthropology, but not as its most noble 'scientific' part. 'The imponderabilia of actual life' was that tolerated portion of anthropology that made it an 'imperfect science'. However it was in the very characteristics of 'the imponderabilia of actual life' that anthropology found the resources to reconfigure itself, questioning concomitantly its own paradigms of scientific values.

It is suggestive that the value of 'the imponderabilia of actual life' in anthropology relied precisely on aspects that did not contribute to a certain scientific standard. This is exactly the point which my experience with international migrants living in the city of São Paulo impelled me to explore further.

Deepening the imperfections

As mentioned earlier, my fieldwork did not provide the uniformities or the representativeness that, according to a specific scientific standard, would be required in order to deliver a reasonable account. On the contrary, in the many involvements and numerous people I came into contact with in the city of São Paulo, *confusion*, *uncertainty* or *vagueness* were constants ingraining the field in my experience, as they were part of other people's experiences - as it seemed to me. The minutiae and intensity of 'the imponderabilia of actual life' imposed itself as a central concern, urging this research venture to come to terms with 'messiness' and instability as constitutive elements of the human experience (and the research process as well).

Thus far, as suggested above, it is not possible to do justice to 'the imponderabilia of actual life' by appealing to elaborate forms of generalisation. The defining characteristic of 'the imponderabilia of actual life' is to be manifested in the details and particulars composing singular lives in unexpected moments in specific places. Taking it seriously requires attention to minute qualities that reveal life to be an abundant but also open-ended endeavour.

This microscopic richness requires an anthropology that is not committed to the abstractive logics of schematisation and systematization. In this way, this investigation intends to join forces with the projects of a cosmopolitan anthropology (Rapport 2012b), and an existential anthropology (Jackson 2005). In the cosmopolitan project, an account of the human is only possible when based on the expression of the individual as a singular embodiment 'that is not obscured or distorted by cultural prejudices, social structures or historical contingencies' (Rapport 2012b:2). In an existential anthropology, the possibility of recognising life as a 'struggle for being' and an experimentation in

which people live the world in their own terms is made available by not reducing existence to any category, such as culture, mind, nature, and others (Jackson 2005:xii). By acknowledging people's life-courses as manifestations of an existential experimentation in the world, this ethnography expects to have reached an understanding of the human in the very singularity presented in the lives of some international migrants I encountered in the city of São Paulo.

This understanding was ethnographically made viable only after a phenomenological approach had been tailored to my need to account for the epistemological requirements of 'the imponderabilia of actual life'. Methodological considerations inspired by references to phenomenological thought had to be crafted in order to make ethnographically visible the enigma I perceived in people's lives – how those lives were pervaded by inconstancies, gaps and surprises that were usually ignored because they were considered too incoherent or too irrelevant for theoretical objectification.

The purposes of this research endeavour draw substantially on Levinas' irreducibility of the Other. This notion inspires this ethnography to express the 'mystery' involved in each personal trajectory I attended and the insufficiency of any sort of systematisation to do justice to its richness. For Levinas, the 'relationship with the other is a relationship with a Mystery' (1987:75), which recognises that the other is not another myself. Although I can recognise the other as resembling me, the other is an exteriority, an alterity that is unknowable to me. The other is unreachable by categories of thought, because the act of gaining access to the other through knowledge is not a relation with the other, as the other is thereby turned into an object referenced for a knowing subject. The other is an exceeding, a mystery that overflows the thought that is being thought. Levinas calls this exceeding an 'infinity' (1969). In acknowledging the absolute alterity of the other, no totality is possible before the infinity produced in this relationship between the other and me. This relationship cannot be reduced to understanding: it is an ethical relationship par excellence, in which I accept the insurmountable alterity of the other, not by the assignment of a category of knowledge that encapsulates the other, but by invoking the presence of the other as a 'face'. The exteriority of the other is actualised in our meeting in the world as 'faces'. The 'face' of the other is not a representation, it is already the manifestation of the relationship between me and the other, in which both of us invoke one another as interlocutors.

Ethnographically, the puzzlement I experienced in trying to understand the people I met during fieldwork and the places I moved around is substantiated in this account through a 'poetics of resonance'. In the limitations of my understanding before their mysteries, I resorted to imagination as a practice to open myself up for what I was not able to foresee or apprehend entirely. Under the rubric of a 'poetics of resonance', I freely exercised the potentialities of what it might be like to be a particular person in a specific moment and situation - being conscious that this would never lead me to gain more objective knowledge about the person, the occurrence or the place. Yet, in going through this aesthetic procedure, I was able to signal to myself—and hopefully my reader—the existence of subtle and inarticulate aspects of human experience that, otherwise, would remain unexplored. The

‘poetics of resonance’, in this way, admits the absolute alterity that informs the mystery present in each person, moment or site and, in surrendering the will to possess knowledge, attempts to manifest the limitless capacities of people, events and places to challenge and overspill totalisations of many sorts.

As knowledge in a positivist sense was not the consolidated outcome of this research endeavour, and perplexity or incompleteness incited the recourse to a ‘poetics of resonance’, this ethnographic experiment became the manifestation of an ethical approach towards the people I encountered during fieldwork. By ethical approach, I mean the invocation of the presence of the people I met as ‘faces’, in Levinas’ terms. As ‘faces’, the people I met exceeded my ideas about them and could not be totally subsumed by overarching explanations. Not only were they a mystery, but each of them substantiated a singularity of their own through the many life moments they shared with me. Each of them became a ‘face’ in the mutual engagement we experienced together that I refer to here as ‘life-journeys’. Each ‘life-journey’ as a ‘face’ held a richness of its own as a continuous realisation that life was not certain and easy. Life was in fact a constant experimentation that no principle of sociality or reasoning could explain or safeguard it as a coherent whole. In the open-ness of the life-journeys portrayed in the following chapters, a sense of ‘infinity’ may be an exaggerated qualifier, but certainly these life-journeys could not be easily encompassed by senses of totality. As Levinas points out, ‘the particular and the personal, which are unsurpassable, magnetize the very field in which the production of infinity is enacted’ (1969:26).

At this point, ‘the imponderabilia of actual life’ reaches a broader significance. From the details and ‘small incidents’ composing the non-scientific part of collective life, the imponderabilia moves to particulars that are irreducible to operations of totalisation, particulars that lay claim to a different response from science: an ethical claim that the anthropologist be sensitive enough not to deface them in objectification.

In discovering possibility in Levinas’ considerations, this ethnographic endeavour aspires to elicit an anthropological approach that it is more an ethics – a considerate attendance to the presence of others in the world - than a form of knowledge; an anthropological approach in which truth is not the outcome of a series of scientific procedures, but truth is a form of appreciation of the human.

The journey ahead

The process of making sense of fieldwork in order to inform an ethnographic text was bumpy and uneven, with diversions, re-routings and sometimes dead-ends. In a way, the chapters to follow will reflect this variability in their unbalanced content. There will be entire chapters dedicated to theoretical discussions, while others are entirely committed to ethnographic portrayals. My hope is that together they can transubstantiate the attentive appreciation of the human lives in question.

A deliberate resolution was made concerning the full consequences of embracing a phenomenological attitude. As an ethnography absolutely committed to expressing the way people experienced their lives in their own terms, —according to the ethnographer’s experience of them — everything was organised around this core concern. Therefore, for instance, considerations on the city of São Paulo will follow only after rendering people’s life-journeys, from evidence prompted by them. No administrative or statistical contextualisation will be delivered, and no map will figure as representation.

The ethnography is organised in three parts. Part I concentrates the theoretical arguments that make this ethnographic experiment possible. Chapter 1 presents inarticulate moments lived with some of the research participants before a phenomenological methodology through imagination is proposed. This methodology sought to account for the fleeting and subtle aspects in the lives of the international migrants I met in the city of São Paulo. Drawing on concepts from Bergson, Dilthey, Dewey, Levinas and Bakhtin, a ‘poetics of resonance’ is crafted in order to make manifest the limitations of the research endeavour before the inherent ‘mystery’ I encountered. Exemplification of this procedure is, then, provided. Chapter 2 elaborates on how some of the people I met during fieldwork became a ‘face’, a singularity found in the intersubjective relationship established between me and each person, and consolidated in the form of a particular ‘life-journey’. The notion of ‘life-journey’ was based on ideas from Dewey, Levinas, and on existential and cosmopolitan discussions in anthropology.

The second part of the thesis features the life-journeys of the people I was able to follow. This is the detailed ethnographic portion in which the notions of ‘poetics of resonance’ and ‘life-journeys’ are fully embodied in the evocation of people’s lives. The particular life-journeys were loosely grouped by the way in which people affirmed certain elements of belonging in their courses. In Chapter 3, the life-journeys of Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee and Kitty repeatedly asserted, in very peculiar manners, the significance of their lives through specific ethnic-cum-national affiliations. I describe these life-journeys as ‘journeys of being’, as they demonstrate continual efforts to align with these reference points. Although anchored in ethnic-cum-national-oriented belongings, the life-journeys of Julieta and Mr. Soh in Chapter 4 incorporated different affiliations with their categories of origin, rendering an oscillating movement between distinctive references, which I called ‘journeys of in-be(ing)tween’. Chapter 5 gathers the life-journeys of Liu and Helen, which were led by very personal understandings of the drives orienting their lives, resulting in unusual courses of experiences. These courses were considered ‘cosmopolitan’ because in a certain way they transgressed categorisations of ethnicity-cum-nationality. They were termed ‘journeys of becoming’, since the values which they relied on allowed them an open-ness for being.

Part III begins with some considerations on migration studies and then returns to the mobility manifested in the life-journeys of the previous chapters to undertake an examination of how the city of São Paulo can be appreciated differently if a phenomenological insight into it is allowed. In this latter section, a ‘poetics of resonance’ pervades the text as a disturbing element based on my

experience from fieldwork, in order to signal the concealed capacities of the city itself to exceed totalising urban conceptions. In what follows, the presence of ethnicity is reconfigured in the urban environment and a different attitude towards the character of cities is proposed.

A research experiment concerned with the richness of micro experiences, and the thickness of singular presences that reveal the inconstancies and incompleteness of life itself, cannot expect to reach complete or neat conclusions. Consequently, in the final part of this text, I provide a summary of the approach undertaken and some of the insights gained through this research.

PART I

CHAPTER 1

THE POETICS OF RESONANCE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPERIMENT IN ANTHROPOLOGY THROUGH IMAGINATION

“I do not intend to speak about, just speak nearby.”

Trinh Minh-ha, *Reassemblage*, 1982.

1.1 LIFE-IN-THE-MAKING: ON UNCERTAINTY AND MOMENTS OF (...)

Life-in-the-making.

How tricky it is.

How unexpected...

I have been learning from people I encountered in the city of São Paulo that life can be unsettling. I first classified many of them as migrants, but now I comprehend that, in fact, their lives

are migrant in the sense they are existentially in continual movement. Uncertainty considered as constituent of life itself also propels the move.

Helen, who was born in South Korea, taught me how to not ask the wrong questions:

Butantã, São Paulo, Brazil - 23 July 2014

Helen reported that she had to ask her husband to explain what that question really meant. The exercise I had set her in our class in Basic Portuguese was too obscure for her. She usually translated the texts I gave in Portuguese, firstly to Japanese, then, if necessary, also to Korean. The question was:

*Você acha que estudar japonês foi uma escolha na sua vida ou foi um acaso do destino?*⁴

For Helen, that question did not make sense at all. With a wrinkled forehead, she told me that fate also included the acts chosen by a person, and that there was no partition between chosen life and assigned life.

After writing in Korean, converting it to Japanese and finally to Portuguese, her written answer was:

*[A vida é] Um pouco de cada. Eu queria estudar uma língua estrangeira mas não necessariamente o japonês.*⁵

Only someone who cannot conceive of people's engagements within uncertain situations as embedded also in judgement and responsibility could make such a dualistic question between choice and fate. Uncertainty was integral to the making of life.

In the same way, Kitty, who was from Paraguay, taught me to respect these moments of suspense when the inconstancy of life demands the entire reformulation of one's own existence:

Bom Retiro, São Paulo, Brazil - 11 February 2014

When I met Kitty, she told me that she believed she was pregnant. She did not know what to do. She said she was profoundly disappointed that, after learning of her pregnancy, Jimmy had not decided to take care of her. Instead, he told her that he was seeing another girl and that he did not know what to do either. Kitty asked him to give her money to buy

⁴ Portuguese: 'Do you believe that studying Japanese was a choice in your life or a twist of fate?' I am not sure how Helen translated the word *destino*. In Portuguese, it can be translated as 'destiny' or 'fate', but as the question tries to convey the dualism between individual choice and determinism, the best translation in English would be 'fate', or even 'fortune', situations in which events happen beyond a person's control. Uncertainty of shared meanings also impacts this conversation.

⁵ Portuguese: *[Life is] Part choice and part fate. I just wanted to study a foreign language, not necessarily Japanese.*

abortion pills, but he replied that he had spent all his money on mobile phone credits and food.

I warned Kitty that abortion was not legal in Brazil and, in most cases, it would be considered a crime. So, she would have no support from the health system and should carefully consider it before deciding to terminate the pregnancy in Brazil. On the other hand, if she decided to have the baby, the public health system in São Paulo would assist pregnant migrants, even those without official documents for legal residence in the country.

(...)

I asked her, then, what she would like to do. She paused a while and sighed, I don't know, I don't know...

During these moments of unclear states, the lives of the people I accompanied expressed the intensity and the entanglements of what is to be alive. In these not-yet-articulate instances, people's awareness was being raised in order to make life keep on going. And it was never easy to do so.

There is richness in this process that is worth appreciating, because, then, one is able to acknowledge how gaps, cracks, pauses, interruptions and non-defined moments of all sorts are integral to life's motion.

The migrants I encountered in the neighbourhood of Bom Retiro in Brazil may bring forth more acutely this erratic course experienced through journeys of hope, love or transformation which express the realization that life-on-the-move is ingrained with indeterminacy and astonishment.

In fact, moments of inarticulacy are ephemeral ones. They are not manifestations of anything definitive; they can be deeply imbued in ambiguity, vagueness and contradiction. However, they are the expression of this attempt to make sense of something in the torrents of life itself. In gaining consciousness in such a way, even without complete enunciation of it, one's existence is prompted to innovatively find new understandings of oneself and the world, reconfiguring the grounds of one's own agency. Life, then, is never a mechanical enterprise.

What is the possible value of an anthropological account boosting its efforts to apprehend these fleeting states of existence? As the trajectories I followed during fieldwork insistently asserted, a migrant's life becomes an open-ended experience, full of diversions and unexpected occurrences. Life finds itself to be an ever unfinished endeavour. No rules of kinship, ethnicity or nationality can ensure its flow or prevent someone from undergoing these points of doubt, hesitation, silence or anxiety.

In most cases, these moments were barely voiced by the people experiencing them. These moments were not part of an ethnotheory or a ritualised practice, they were entirely spontaneous

and fortuitous. Still, they were suggestive of this openness in which the subjective and the social, the conscious and the unconscious seem to merge and overlap, allowing existence to be re-constituted or innovated.

For Hastrup, it is through the 'inarticulate mind' that anthropology has the opportunity to 'reclaim the areas of silence as a basis for understanding agency' (1995:193). As a dynamic zone of contact, the mind is partially articulate, having a proportion of knowledge that remains inaccessible to others. Anthropology, then, should attempt to rearticulate what could not or would not be voiced.

Fernandez identifies the impossibility of reaching the minds of others, recognising it as 'meaning deficit' in two ways at once: deficit instilled in the dynamics of biographies and cultures themselves, and deficit in the 'theoretical analyses and explanatory vocabularies' in anthropology which miss everything that 'is profound in the human experience' (1995: 27).

In acknowledging simultaneously that life in its very process of making is composed of nebulous moments of awareness and that deficient understandings are part of people's relations in the world, anthropology can deliberately disclose new modes of experience and consciousness that are usually left unexplored. In order to be truthful to the wholeness (and hole-ness) of such experiences, a particular way of knowing in anthropology is required in order to integrate these aspects into an ethnographic account.

1.2 ON EXPERIENCE AND CONSCIOUSNESS: TOWARDS A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

The process of understanding what it is not entirely expressed is possible if the inarticulate is deemed part of human experience: a form of the immediate realization of the world in the subtle way it is individually and momentarily lived. To this extent, consciousness permeates experience in the very process of living.

As Cohen and Rapport (1995) have highlighted, consciousness in anthropology came to be a sensitive notion, questioning, as it does, the dichotomies between the individual and the social, the body and the mind, the inner and the outer person. But it also offers the opportunity to develop investigations attentive to the interplay between the subjective, the social and the mind.

In the present analysis, a phenomenological approach is invoked as enabling an incorporating of the aforementioned inarticulate moments and inspiring a way of understanding in anthropology beyond a positivist scientific standard. The phenomenology here tailored to make sense of the richness of the lives I attended will be mostly based on considerations of Bergson, Dilthey, Dewey and Levinas.

Both Bergson and Dilthey devoted insightful attention to the theme of immediate knowledge as a foundational ground: how this concerned the place of freedom in human consciousness (for the former), and the specificity of human science in relation to the natural sciences (for the latter). Contrary to a Kantian assumption in which the human mind is constituted by *a priori* categories that organise the way men apprehend reality and organise the world, Bergson (1959a) posited the presence of a realm in consciousness that is prior to any classification. In the depths of consciousness, different '*états de conscience*' (states of consciousness) can be operative. There is the domain in which the immediate experience is lived in the multiplicity of '*faits de conscience*' (facts of consciousness). This multiplicity exists in simultaneity in a very peculiar temporality called '*durée*'. In the pure *durée*, it is not possible to attribute name, relation or definition to any fact of consciousness. These are operations afforded in a subsequent stage by consciousness. For this reason, this state of consciousness in the simultaneity of the different facts of consciousness is prior to the presence of language or abstract reasoning, for example. Although it is a highly inarticulate state of consciousness, it is in the *durée* that the experience of freedom is available. For Bergson (1959b), there lies in the multiplicity of the *durée* the possibility to generate a creative stance towards life, which he refers to as the '*élan vital*' (vital tone).

Whereas Bergson's concern with the immediate data of consciousness stimulates an attention to the reticent moments lived by people, Dilthey motivates a consideration of these experiences as part of the complex activity of producing understanding throughout the process of life itself. In considering all lived experience of things, thoughts or feelings as 'facts of consciousness', Dilthey posited the existence of immediate awareness: a 'pre-reflexive mode of self-givenness in which the dichotomies of form and content, subject and object characteristic of reflexive consciousness do not exist' (1989:247). For him, as for Bergson, consciousness is not restricted only to representational and intellectual operations. However, 'facts have their existence only within consciousness: thus only the facts of consciousness are immediately given and certain for scientific analysis' (Dilthey 1989:277). In defining experience as the elementary aspect of human understanding, Dilthey (2002) attached the very processes of knowing to the movement of life itself; between the two there existed a vital 'nexus'. The course of a life consisted of lived experiences connected to each other through consciousness, i.e., experiences that are facts of consciousness. This nexus of facts of consciousness is linked to the continuum that makes one's own life, which is composed of the nexus of past-present-future implications, the nexus of relations with other beings, the nexus of external organizations, such as associations or governments (and other nexuses). The pursuit of a science that is effectively committed to take into account human processes of consciousness has to be, to this extent, the explication of the structural articulation of these points of connectedness. These are, after Bergson

and Dilthey, existent aspects of consciousness that should be acknowledged when appreciating other people's lives.

The ethnographic experiment being unfolded in this thesis is interested to make visible how *the unclear moments of lived experience can be revelatory of people's own movement: how they reach new awareness of their lives, and so keep going*. These unclear moments of lived experiences have also been termed 'the pre-objective', and have been approached by other philosophers, such as Husserl, Schütz and Merleau-Ponty (see Throop 2005). In this specific account, I draw mostly on Bergson's idea of the *durée* and *élan vital* to begin to understand how these imprecise moments of consciousness can impart new vivacity to someone's life, recognising life as an on-going venture. In turn, Dilthey's elaboration of the pre-objective experience—his outlining of it through a range that spans from the 'most rudimentary level prior to analytical separation of the subject and object' (*erleben*) (Ermath 1978:130) to the most clarified and objective ones - further supports my considerations on the connectedness of this realm to other structures of life. In particular, Dilthey's hermeneutic procedure encourages my ethnography to disclose the connectedness between moments of consciousness – even the most opaque ones - and the making of people's lives.

Dilthey (2002) proposed hermeneutics as processes of understanding and interpretation. Understanding and interpretation are processes based on the singularity of individual existences that through the intelligibility of their own inner lived experiences were able to develop a self-understanding that emerged from the apprehension of other lives. In other words, understanding others was possible only through the transposition of one's own lived experiences in the re-creation of the connectedness of the others' lived experiences. This re-experiencing of other states of mind was necessary because the existence of others was 'given only from the outside, in sensory events, gestures, words, and actions' (Dilthey 1972:231). Thus, in such re-comprehension of other people's experiences, everything must be translated out of one's own sense of life.

In the ethnographic experiment of this thesis, then, connectedness will be approached by re-creating it as an experience evoked in the researcher's own inner experience. In other words, in order to better understand the lives I followed during fieldwork, I will incorporate the inarticulate moments of existence in the research process by re-animating these occurrences with resources from my own experiences with the research participants.

In this re-experiencing of others' lived experience, imagination is central: it becomes fundamental to this process of understanding. As Dilthey himself stated, 'human beings can experience many other kinds of existence through imagination' (2002:237). It is in the use of imagination as a way of understanding in anthropology (Harris and Rapport 2015) that this analysis

intends to spend its efforts so as to preserve the richness of the lives I encountered during fieldwork research.

However, it must be noted that Dilthey's hermeneutics justifies the adoption of imagination as a way of re-creating ethnographically the lived experience of others—a way to proceed to re-gaining the connectedness of the lives of research subjects—*rather than* a means of discerning the meaning of research subjects' intentions. Hermeneutics has been influencing anthropology mostly through a Weber-inspired exploration of meaning in social action. In the experiment of this thesis, by contrast, a hermeneutics of connectedness is aspired to, instead of a hermeneutics of signification. Some may contest this, insisting that connectedness is attainable solely through the mediation of meaning. Nevertheless, here rests the research motive.

This emphasis on re-gaining the connectedness inherent in the making of people's lives complies with Levinas' assertion that a relationship with the other is essentially ethical before the irreducibility of the other. In-as-much as it is not possible to determine the meanings fulfilling the other, there remains the effort to connect with the other. This connectedness, as inspired by Dilthey's hermeneutics, entails eliciting a relationship with the other by a process of sensing the other through one's own inner experiences. Thus, connectedness is not substantiation – elucidating the substance of another's meaningful life - it is evocation.

In broadening the scope of what is possible to be known in human affairs, including the most tenuous forms of consciousness, Bergson and Dilthey open up a horizon of possibilities for understanding life experience, now as a continuous movement of making sense of self and the world. As Throop urges, the examination of experiences that 'reside on the fringes of our abilities to articulate, verbalize and interpret' may 'allow researchers to investigate in finer detail those modes of experience that lie on the peripheries of the patterning imperatives of our attentional modalities'(2002:19).

Throop urges a cultural phenomenology of moral experience in which an exploration of subjectivity is made possible by recognising that 'moral sensibilities are implicated in the articulation of experience' (2010b:269). Following Levinas's considerations on suffering, Throop considers the pain and suffering of the Yapese individuals he followed as 'opportunities to appreciate the integrity and mystery of the other', taking into account the 'density of meaningless suffering and pain - meaninglessness evidenced in the very phenomenology of suffering as a rupture of the knowable' (2010b:277). In examining these modalities of 'phenomenological modification of experience', Throop seeks to reach an understanding of the 'complexities and ambiguities of a life lived in an effort after meaning and virtue' (2010b:278).

Having reached this point, not only does the act of understanding become central to maintain the course of a human life in itself, but it equally makes plausible an approach that uses imagination as a way to comprehend the experiences of other human beings as they try to connect, and so to keep going. Although Levinas (1967, 1987) reminds us that knowing may well be an unattainable operation in the face of the other, the effort cannot be in vain. In the end, it might be at least a form of recognition, of appreciation.

1.3 AESTHETICS AS A PHENOMENOLOGICAL WAY OF KNOWING

As Harris (2007) underscores, a way of knowing is a 'path to knowledge'. Since it is a situated activity for the anthropologist, a way of knowing is 'the movement of a person from one context to another' (Harris 2007:1). In general, this movement coincides with dislocations in space, time and/or lifeworlds. In the situation in which the researcher does not visualise the path, what are the recourses available to sustain the movement?

In the circumstances of the lives I followed in the city of Sao Paulo, perplexity was a constant impression. All the attempts to document these lives seemed to me to be incomplete. I gathered extensive fieldwork notes, collected long interviews and shared intense social commitments with some of my research subjects. Yet, no path was recognisable to me to explain the complexity of the experiences to which I had been exposed.

As mentioned, for recreational purposes during fieldwork, I found myself writing fictional narratives as a personal recourse to make sense of what I could not entirely picture in the field. The jumbles of some trajectories and the vicissitudes of others were then imaginatively embraced in this more generous aesthetic dimension of recognition.

After the fieldwork period, this operation of writing imaginative pieces of narratives gained other relevance retrospectively. Suddenly, it moved from being a leisure activity done during respite moments of fieldwork to becoming evidence of a specific research process, in which I unconsciously adopted imagination as a supporting approach.

The composition of inventive stories based on the information and involvements I had with people in the field somehow expressed the possibility of allowing people's lives to emerge, embedded in depths that I sensed but could not grasp in the usual modes of research documentation, such as note-taking, interviews and photography. There were details and unexpressed forms of being that I only sensed after going through this aesthetic operation of imagining.

In reimagining my experiences, I became conscious that everything that was being explored was, in fact, not 'real'. Notwithstanding, in doing so I was able to reach a sense of the many contradictory and apparent trivialities that make life so rough and stormy. It drove me to remain open to the way people lived their lives in their fullness and voidness. The fictional pieces could not be 'true', but they allowed me to feel how every person was immersed in dense and complex moments of living, such as the awkward instances of silence, pause, sigh, hesitation, absence, uneasiness, and misunderstanding.

It is of these inarticulate expressions of being (or becoming, as this investigation will later explore) that imagination 'speaks', playing the methodological role of bringing to attention the minutiae that makes life 'full of sound and fury'.

But how can an aesthetic element such as imagination be convergent with the affordance of knowledge? Again, Dilthey's work can encourage an attempt to outline a proposal, while Dewey's provides a foundation.

Dilthey (1985) believed that the source of all artistic creation is lived experience. Imagination cannot arise from a vacuum: it works from the facts of life and applies cognitive transformations to them. The aesthetic procedure secures the intensity of lived experience to be appreciated through objects of art. Artworks disclose a 'sense of life' and 'vitality' through 'reverberating' the emotion of an individual human life (Dilthey 1985:60).

Similarly, but more radically, Dewey considered the experience of living as aesthetic experience *per se*. An experience is the outcome of 'the interaction of live creature and environing conditions', which by being integrated into the 'stream of experiences from other experiences', reaches a completeness in its consummation that turns it into '*an* experience' (1980:36-37). The aesthetic experience is the one in which a fulfilment is achieved in such a manner that the whole creature feels alive. Experience is already 'heightened vitality', and as 'the fulfilment of an organism in its struggle and achievement in a world of things, it is art in germ. Even in its rudimentary forms, it contains the promise of that delightful perception which is esthetic experience' (1980:18-19).

Imagination, in this view, is constitutive of all conscious experience for the reason that the course of life in its movement is also made of gaps within the many experiences. Imagination plays the decisive role in supporting the living creature in speculating on possible understandings in order to connect across the gaps and thus to venture into what is unknown. In the aesthetic experience of life, the re-statement of meanings through imagination is crucial because it grants consciousness the perception of a flow to life and, at the same time, the awareness of the interruptions in its flux that fuels the feeling of being fresh and alive (Dewey 1980:54).

Inspired by the 'sense of life', 'vitality' and 'being alive' suggested by Dilthey and Dewey, the ethnographic experiment of this thesis is animated by the adoption of an aesthetic approach to make sense of the richness found in people's lives. As Dewey writes:

'Tangled scenes of life are made more intelligible in esthetic experience: not, however, as reflection and science render things more intelligible by reduction to conceptual form, but by presenting their meanings as the matter of clarified, coherent, and intensified or "impassionate" experience' (1980:302).

Previously, Dilthey's hermeneutics have been mentioned as an encouragement to gain understanding of the *connectedness* of people's experiences through the use of imagination. Reiterating this point, it may now be consolidated with the notion of imagination as a means of re-creating the sense of *vitality* in human life.

Thus, imagination here is not exactly a 'path' that reaches knowledge by making life more intelligible. Imagination is an open-ness that makes life something re-inhabited as vibrant and vivacious, through the mediation of lived experience. In this way, it becomes more an invitation to appreciate the human than a disclosing of it - following Levinas' acknowledgement of the irreducibility of the other and our responsibility to attend this presence without turning it into an object.

To sum up: the aesthetic approach developed here intends to broaden the understanding of people's experiences in the making of their lives by reconstituting the integrity, i.e. the vitality, of their involvements by recourse to imagination – mine and theirs. Imagination will be substantiated in snippets of fictional narratives that at the same time intend to indicate the connectedness of specific experiences to other levels of human relatedness in other human beings.

It may be alleged that this project precariously combines philosophical complexities that have opposing canons, namely hermeneutics, pragmatism and phenomenology. Nonetheless, I insist on putting them together under the term 'phenomenology' because I believe they all concur in unfolding human lived experience.

1.4 THE POETICS OF RESONANCE: AN EXPERIMENT

The aesthetic operation in which imagination is deployed as a way of appreciating the human in this thesis will, as I have explained, be designated as a 'poetics of resonance'. The poetics of resonance recognises the instability associated with existence and the limitations of certain models of reasoning.

It therefore regards the plausibility of understanding as a provisional proposal of recognition and approximation at best.

As an approximation directed to apprehend those pieces of inarticulate human expression that constitute the richness involved in the making of people's lives, the poetics of resonance aims to capture this generous dimension: to give an account of how life in its precarious and impermanent moments can be embraced with all the incongruity, inconsistency and confusion involved. In animating these fading instances, it aims to integrate what seems to be incongruous in life itself, reconstituting its complexity in ambiguity and contradiction. *To know through this poetics of imagination is to know through 'resonance' in the sense that while one might not be able objectively to reason about people's lives and experiences, one can subjectively intuit or sense what it is like to live a particular life or experience in its richness.*

'Poetics' here refers to the aesthetic operation of converting lived experience into written expression. Since I as the author expects to do this by relying on both my and others' experiences, the poetics here undertaken alludes to Bakhtin's idea of 'heteroglossia', which is the acknowledgement of the diverse regimes present in the same language. The most relevant aspect of Bakhtinian heteroglossia for the poetics here aimed at is the 'double-voiced discourse':

'Heteroglossia (...) is another's speech in another's language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way. Such speech constitutes a special type of double-voiced discourse. It serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author. In such discourse there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions. And all the while these two voices are dialogically interrelated, they - as it were - know about each other (just as two exchanges in a dialogue know of each other and are structured in this mutual knowledge of each other); it is as if they actually hold a conversation with each other. Double-voiced discourse is always internally dialogized. (...) A potential dialogue is embedded in them, one as yet unfolded, a concentrated dialogue of two voices, two world views, two languages' (Bakhtin 1981: 324).

The attempt to transfigure others' experiences through such poetics aspires therefore to establish an alternative dialogue between my authorial consciousness and other people's (authorial) consciousnesses. A dialogue that is believed possible by way of the notion of resonance *as an aesthetic and ethic mediation*.

‘Resonance’ in this poetics means the capacity that one has to be affected by the expressions of feelings and experiences of others, due to the fact that these feelings and experiences can be evoked in oneself. The aesthetic effect involved here is to elicit in oneself the experience another has gone through in a way that, in conveying that experience through poetics, yet others - the readers - may go through an approximate experience.

Wikan (2012) gained insight into feelings of resonance through conversations with Balinese scholars. They advised her to create ‘resonance’ in herself with the people and their problems in order to convey to the world what the Balinese were like. From a Balinese standpoint, resonance was a sort of understanding embedded deeply in sentiments of empathy or compassion, it was ‘a willingness to *engage* with another world, life, or idea; an ability to use one’s experience (...) to try to grasp, or convey, meanings that do not reside in words, “facts”, nor text but are evoked in the meeting of one experiencing subject with another or with a text’ (2012: 57).

In this ethnography, resonance is the phenomenological approach I found by which means to bring to light the fleeting moments of perplexity or ambiguity that were repeatedly experienced in the lives I followed during fieldwork. This empathic process of understanding shares with Wikan’s notion the intention of ‘grasping meanings that are conveyed beyond words’.

However, resonance in this ethnography is also ethical mediation in the sense asserted by Levinas (1969), the kind of possible relationship between me and the irreducibility of the other. In recognising the impossibility of reaching the other through knowledge, I invoke sensations and experiences of mine that allow me to imagine how it is to be in a particular person’s place, conscious that I will never entirely know this person for sure. Thus, resonance is this willingness to recognise and appreciate the presence of another person, despite the unattainability of understanding this person completely.

Interferences within resonance are multiple. Throop (2010a) examined how his own personal incident of grief affected his relations with and perceptions of the Yap people he had been researching for a long time. He referred to the seminal contribution from Renato Rosaldo (1989), in which one gains insight into people’s understanding through the empathetic process of going through similar experiences. Throop identified that, in holding homologous sentiments of bereavement when attending funerals on the Island of Yap, his emotional state surely opened new focuses of awareness about the changes in the Yapese groups he was following. However, ‘empathetic resonance’, as he called it, with the bereaved was not something transparently achieved that led to a complete new comprehension of the Yapese. Quite the reverse, empathy was a course punctuated by moments of distancing, confusion and displacement as well. As a result, ‘empathetic resonance’ is in fact a process

gained through time (also Hollan 2008), impregnated also with obscure moments that intermittently allow new empathetic moments to take place.

Acknowledging the limitations of empathetic processes before the irreducibility of beings, situations or moments, the notion of resonance here invoked, then, admits itself to be an approximation, not a transparent connection.

For the purposes of this ethnographic experiment, resonance is this capacity people have to be affected by others and the world. It takes the form of invoking a sense of appreciation between oneself, others and the world. Simultaneously, one's own act of resonance can, in turn, affect others and the world by further 'reverberation'.

Resonance and reverberation are co-related operations in the sense that at the same time one is affected by others and the world, one may manifest through oneself this effect. However, resonance and reverberation are not necessarily the same. Reverberation is the voluntary or involuntary manifestation of the way someone has been affected by others and the world, possibly affecting others and the world as well.

Resorting to Dilthey's hermeneutics as explained above, resonance is the process of apprehending other lives by connecting other people's experiences to one's own inner experiences. In re-experiencing others' existences through one's own lived experiences, a particular and personal understanding of people's lives is made possible. This understanding can be expressed back to others and the world as reverberation, offering another possibility for others and the world to engage with it or not.

Thus, experiences are the fundamental elements that constitute people's capacities to resonate and reverberate. Resonance and reverberation in this way are not physical operations or forms of communication, but, after Levinas, they are forms of evocation based on people's personal experiences. Through this evocation, people may be able to recognise (or not) the other or the world as a worthwhile presence to whom to establish (or not) an ethical and reciprocal attitude.

Resonance as an imaginative and poetic act, and reverberation as its reconfigured expression derived of one's experiences, can lead to an understanding of human social life as 'vibration'. 'Vibration' is the condition of existing as a living being in the world. In this conception, each being 'vibrates' in a unique way because each of us lives different experiences in the world. When being affected by reverberation, one's vibration can either tune up to the very similar oscillations of others, or can achieve totally discrepant configurations ignoring the presence of others. Conversely, one's vibration can also reverberate out affecting others' vibrations, at least to those open to receive them. Reverberation may provoke changes in others' vibration depending on the sort of experiences each of them has been through. In this way, one is able to vibrate assonantly or dissonantly with others

and/or the environment. Further, in living a life and going through varied experiences, a person develops capabilities and is able to alter her own vibration along a life period

A musical analogy can be useful here, regarding vibrations as units of sound. The 'concert' of different vibrational presences can lead the 'ensemble' of congregating beings to play music or noise. Resonance can be imagined as consisting of appreciation of the different arrangements in people's reverberations that generate diverse forms of relationality to other beings and the world, relationalities that engender concrete ethical effects in other beings and the world.

For the moment, it is sufficient to emphasise that the notions of resonance and reverberation provide a sympathetic trope to consider life as a vibrating venture, in which each being has a particular frequency of movement because of specific sets of experiences. In reverberating a determined frequency of experience, one being can influence the vibration of others. The ones struck by it may change their vibration or not depending on the quality of the experiences they have already had. As long as the tuning up to another's frequency occurs, one is able to enliven in oneself a version of the other's experience.

At this point, having outlined what 'poetics' and 'resonance' will mean in my approach, it is necessary, however, to indicate how the poetics of resonance will materialise in my text. Although the imaginative process will evoke specific impressions, it does not aspire to 'fill the gaps' by allocating words, feelings or deeds to my research subjects in the manner of a ventriloquist's work. The poetics of resonance intends to instigate in the reader a perception of inchoate manifestations of human experience. It hopes to do so by accentuating their existence as might an amplifying device—and in so doing provide a sense of vitality and complexity to the lives of those whom I met.

As mentioned above, the poetics of resonance intends to affect the reader by transforming what resonated in me from different research participants into imaginative pieces of writing. These pieces of fiction, then, become deliberate attempts of reverberation that may or may not instigate something in the reader. At least, there will remain the invitation to connect.

The poetics of resonance takes concrete form in this ethnographic experiment through fragments of fictional narrative that are based on the data and observations I lived through during fieldwork. In other words, here are micro stories as expressions of how each singular encounter resonated in me. These snippets try to materialise these moments of transient consciousness, in which there are simultaneity and multiplicity of states, when people do not yet have a narrative or a conception to rely on and are immersed in experiential tides pulling in different directions - sometimes opposing ones. Concomitantly, the short fictions convey those very instances when people are generating the necessary nexuses involved in the making of their lives, and gaining awareness of their situations. In these moments, one may be confronted with the varied relations and social worlds one

is connected to all at once, becoming sensible of one's own reaches and legacies oscillating in scenarios of limitations and potentialities. At these sensitive points, it is possible to glimpse the richness and the roughness of being alive.

The fictionalised stories will appear throughout the text as an amplifying instrument. Respecting their inner rationale as fiction, and the epistemological distance imputed in them as means for appreciating people's lives, the imaginative narratives will hold characters and plots of their own, though they were inspired by the people and situations I encountered during my fieldwork. They are not 'true' in the sense of reproducing witnessed acts or facts, but they *are* true as ways to re-create the vitality intrinsic to life as I experienced it alongside some of my research subjects in the field.

One last remark. In the poetics of resonance that is here being experimented with, it is not assumed that the procedure of using fictional pieces of writing necessarily calls for the implementation of great literary skills. First of all, whenever the proposed phenomenological approach is suitable, life itself is deemed poetic, as Dewey proposes. Thus, every attempt to express this experience is relevant, though it is not my intention to make any literary claim here.

In order to make the intended operation in a poetics of resonance more evident, two samples follow.

1.4.1 'THIS IS NOT YOUR LIFE': FIRST GLIMPSE

Again, Helen's experiences will guide the exposition. The situation:

Butantã, São Paulo, Brazil - 28th May 2014

Today I went to Helen's. When I arrived there, her daughter was already sleeping. Helen prepared coffee in the kitchen, brought two mugs and we began to work on her Portuguese lessons.

(...)

Helen told me how she met her husband, and showed me her wedding album as well. She commented that Sam was younger than her and in South Korea women usually get married to older men. When Helen introduced Sam to her father, he did not approve of her relationship with him, because Sam was considered a foreigner, a non-Korean. (...) In her accented and hesitant way of speaking in Portuguese, she stuttered repeatedly on the words

'eu penso' (I think/I believe) and 'consegue' (to be able/to succeed) to express: Eu penso, penso... ah, eu penso não consi... não consegue... ah, não consigo casar, eh, com Sam⁶.

As mentioned earlier, Helen was already fluent in Korean and Japanese and was learning Portuguese at that moment she was in São Paulo. Living within many languages, she exhibited recurrent pauses in her speech in Portuguese, signalling the effort to verbalise her thoughts in this new language. What distinguished this moment of stammer from her regular way of making conversation in Portuguese was the intense repetition of parts of the same words. This transmitted an uncanny texture that something more was involved in her thoughts about the difficulties of getting married. This compelled me to consider her marriage as an apprehensive moment that had great impact on her life trajectory, and this tacit clue triggered a fictional passage in my own writings

From her wedding ceremony, I had the fruition of the wedding photo album and also the audio recorded interview with her. The charming pictures I cannot share here, but some bits of the conversation will be transcribed⁷ below to make as explicit as possible how the poetics of resonance emerges from people's life stories.

Butantã, São Paulo, Brazil - 28 May 2014

Helen: Uh, how have I met my husband? Uh... I was in Japan, N----- city. He also... study, studied N----- University. Uh... I study, studied, was studying education, uh... education, Japanese for foreigners at the Japanese language centre in university. (...) For one year, he study in Tokyo, only Japanese language. Then, he goes to... goes to N----- University. He speaks well, uh, he speaks Japanese well. But he... was still studying Japanese at the language centre in N----- University. I... we see, I saw at the language centre, but hummm, but I don't know, I don't know him. When there was the event, uh, a travel, travel foreign students... we, uh, students, uh, travelled, travel... an island⁸... (...) Small. Small island near N----- city. There, we... meet...

Simone: Ah, that's interesting. So, you were both students at the centre and you met during this travel.

⁶ Portuguese: *I think, think... ah, I think I will not... not be abl... I will not be able to get married to, eh, Sam.*

⁷ Due to the long section of interview being displayed, I opted to reproduce it here translated in English. However, the interview took place in Portuguese. I also tried to maintain the way Helen conveyed her ideas in Portuguese in the translation, albeit it may sound repetitive and 'not totally correct.

⁸ The underlined words are the ones Helen spoke in English.

H: Yes, when I look at him, he, uh, smiles. Smile, ahhh, hummm, very good-looking. Handsome. Because he is younger. Like brother. But he, he interest in me. He said, he said it later. Yes, I like but when I heard... his age, oh, brother... younger... like younger brother.

S: How many years?

H: Four. (...) He was not, uh, target, boyfriend target. Because... he... he younger, uh... and forei... he was foreigner too, not Korean.

S: Ah, and for your family, does it matter?

H: When I... introduced... uh, my husband... introduced Sam, uh, uh, my father, he said... I don't like, I don't like foreigners. Uh... Brazil...it's too too far away. South Korea, Brazil...contrast. He does not want... his daughter, his daughter, uh, away... I don't like. (...) He went... attend my gradua... graduation ceremony. Uh... that moment, he meet Sam. But 'I don't like foreigners, I like Koreans.' I think, think...uh, I think I will not...not be able... uh, I will not be able to get married to, uh, Sam.

(...)

H: Dating... I believe for... seven years, 2002 until 2009. We, uh, are married couple...uh, 2009, in 2009, March 2009.

S: Did you get married in Japan?

H: No, in Korea.

S: In Korea, cool... Where, in your hometown or in Seoul?

H: No, it was near Seoul. Eh, would you like to see a picture?

S: Yes.

H: Wedding picture.

(...)

S: Wow, how beautiful!

H: Traditional wedding.

S: Yes, with all the garments... wow, how beautiful, Helen.

H: Everything is Korean.

S: Oh, did his mother attend?

H: His mother and... his aunt.

S: Look...

H: It's my mother.

S: This is your mother. Oh, my, how gorgeous... oh, smile (pointing to a photo in which Sam is smiling)

(...)

H: These are my friends. Aunt, friend, Japanese friend, university friend.

S: Is this in Korea?

H: Yes, here is a...uh... folk village, folk village in Korea.

S: Eh, you got married here...

H: Many tourists, tourists. They all tourists.

(...)

S: Look, how beautiful, another outfit. Is this the ceremony?

H: Yes, yes, indeed.

S: What a gorgeous ceremony. And everyone attending respectfully.

H: Half attending, half tourists.

(...)

H: We were living in... Japan. We could not practice... rehearsal... could not... my sister booked, uh, for us. Later... I travelled... some months before... he, Sam, two weeks before he arrived.

S: Was everything ready?

H: No, no rehearsal... very interesting.

S: Here, is that you arriving...?

H: Yes, yes.

S: Wow, everyone arrives concealed...

H: Josan-dé dynasty in Korea... 600 years ago...

(...)

S: Cool, are you inside? Look, there is a musical band in the front... traditional performers... Sam, on horse, you, inside the box.

(...)

S: Were you the one to choose the traditional wedding?

H: I... he... I want give... him... experience of... marriage... Korean wedding, traditional wedding.

S: How nice, and did he like it?

H: When he... after the wedding... how about your... feeling? I don't know, he said... he... attended an event, not his wedding.

Indeed, the interview has a richness of its own. If there is anything that the poetics of resonance can add to what has already been revealed, it is to echo the uneasiness imbued by Helen in her stammering recounting of her experience. I wonder to myself whether it is possible to reconstitute the intensity that a wedding episode would have on someone whose trajectory

comprised elements similar to Helen's trajectory, how it becomes a locus of tension in the making of a life.

Helen's stammering moment during the interview resonated in me an awareness of the possible difficulties she went through by choosing to get married to a non-Korean. This prompted me to imagine through the poetics of resonance. Here is what I have imagined for Helen and I hope it can further resonate with the reader:

Behind the red curtain, the world outside is blurred luminescence and movement. Red light floods the box inside, and the white mantle covering my hands is scarlet-tinted. I can hear old friend Joon asking for a cigarette. I sit here, motionless, as if I were sculpted with the hanbok⁹ and all the little pieces dangling on the sash tied over my head. I am a lonesome princess locked in this little music box. If you could open it now, you would listen to my heart boop-boop-beep-bopping, reckless. No one can see me here. Yet, I hold this honourable position, head up high, chest upright, hands flat tied; here inside, immobile, preventing the fake eyelashes, the mascara, the red dots on my face from melting down. Here I stay, recalling that everything started with a smile. Your smile beyond Korean. Your smile beyond Japanese. Your smile beyond Portuguese. Your smile in the Foreign Languages Centre. Your smile in S----- Island. Your smile and the stars... But my father, oh, my father, he did explicitly say in Korean, *I don't like foreigners! You should marry a Korean, I don't want you living so far away in Brazil. But, dad, we're living in Japan! And what can I do if I don't like a Korean? I love Him!* And all the miserable complaints thundering over our heads. Besides the inflaming words already boomed, here we are, my father out there, somewhere, standing with mom, waiting for us. Here I am, hidden in this palanquin. So far we arrived... Where are you?

I hear drums beating from a distance. The palanquin is being lifted. The lads are already carrying me, my best male friends. The interior has been shaken and my headpieces are tak-tik-tiking above. My heart pumps wildly. Am I ready? The drums bang louder and slower, the handcart is being lowered. I breathe deeper. The red curtain is being drawn, no other way to flee, it will be the first step on the grounds of our marriage. Tiptoeing the right foot out of the palanquin, finally I see the world again. Flocks of tourists are flashing their cameras at me. My eyes search desperately for you. The palace is crowded, wedding guests mixed with visitors. Where are you?

I see you. I see you in blue. Blue turumagi¹⁰. You smile.

⁹Traditional formal attire in Korea, general word for both men's and women's formal clothes.

¹⁰Traditional overcoat for male attire in Korea.

In a poetics of resonance, I imagine Helen's wedding ceremony as a moment when the familial conflict underlines the formal event: the presence of members of the two different families and the challenge to recreate new family bonds; the need to overcome languages, customs and prejudgments; the uneasiness of giving meaning to ceremonial procedures that were not part of their previous experiences; the discomfort in acknowledging the presence of strangers in a moment that was supposed to be very intimate.

In this imagined moment of fleeting pause during the ceremony, many elements of Helen's background were at stake signalling her references of kinship, ethnicity and nationality. However, simultaneously, all the possibilities and risks of getting married to someone considered a foreigner were also there opening a whole new horizon of experimentation.

In appreciating the density of people's lives, anthropology can try to be aware of the capacities involved in making a life, and all the entanglements this entails. It is in the density of a life that lie the potentialities and inventiveness for overcoming predicaments or generating new forms of existence in the world.

In order to approach a moment of richness in Helen's life, I use imagination as a method of approximation, not in the sense of logics of probability of success, but in the sense of a poetics of resonance. In doing so, I must say - parodying Magritte - 'This is not Helen's life'. Yet, this is the way I found it necessary to *sense* Helen's life. Or do you, the reader, believe this is the anthropologist's life?

1.4.2 THE EXCEEDING CITY: SECOND GLIMPSE

This second sample of methodology is directed at creating an alternative appreciation of the city of São Paulo. I will not display the detailed materials by which the imagined piece is grounded. Instead, I will concentrate on expounding how the poetics of resonance can be a useful literary recourse to unsettle the impersonal rhetoric typically used in scholarly discussions about cities.

São Paulo, a whirl.

My mind, whirling... could I swallow the world and the non-world and still be alive? Better not to breath.

Walk. And you cannot be invisible. Someone may stumble over you, a car horn will warn you, you will force rushing people to outpace you. Your tiny little body in movement, an obstacle, an impediment, a living surprise.

Três Rios Street, José Paulino Street, Graça Street, Ribeiro de Lima Street, Italianos Street, Sólón Street, Rio Branco Avenue, Tiradentes Avenue, Luz subway station, São Mateus bus station, Bresser bus station, Capão Redondo subway station, Changsin Dong Street, Bolivar Square. Stepping on particular cartographies, misunderstanding geographies.

Do not get your bearings. Let it go. Let the polluted air fill your lungs, let the noisy traffic deafen your mind, let the crack addict steal your sense of dignity. To let or not to let.

Nevermind. What do you see?

Korean-ness. It's only a name. Paraguayan-ness. It's only a name. Bolivian-ness. It's only a name. Brazilian-ness. It's only a name.

Could you imagine cities inside people? Palm trees. Mountains. Colours. Blue sky. Grapes. You would be impressed by the places that inhabit each person.

Brazil, more than 203,980,000 people. São Paulo, more than 11,244,369 people. I am one.

Components of this sample are drawn from my fieldnotes. For instance, the sentence 'to let or not let', in fact, refers to the process of looking for a place to rent in Bom Retiro. The crack user is an image recalling the presence of many crack addicts in the area, who lived or wandered in precarious states. 'It's only a name' is the answer of a clothing store owner to my puzzlement about the meaning of her store's name, while 'Korean-ness', 'Paraguayan-ness', 'Bolivian-ness' and 'Brazilian-ness' indicate the senses of national belonging affirmed by different people in different occasions. 'Mountains. Colours. Blue sky. Grapes.' are the nouns used by some of the students to write about their sense of home during a session of the Basic Portuguese classes that I taught. And 'I am one' is the statement of one of my research participants. Adding to this, Três Rios Street, José Paulino Street, Graça Street, Ribeiro de Lima Street, Italianos Street, Sólón Street, Rio Branco Avenue, Tiradentes Avenue, Luz subway station are locations in the neighbourhood of Bom Retiro, whereas São Mateus bus station, Bresser bus station, Capão Redondo subway station are transport hubs situated in other districts of São Paulo, and Changsin Dong Street and Bolivar Square are, respectively, references from the city of Seoul, in South Korea, and from the city of Quillacollo, in Bolivia.

In gathering these episodes together, overlapping and transforming the meanings of each other, the imaginative piece reaches a disorientating texture that I believe also expresses the experience of living in the city of São Paulo. Simultaneously, it evokes the diverse perceptions of time

and space coexisting and entangled with one another in very disjointed manners that awkwardly also contribute to highlight the unexpected capacities of São Paulo to reconfigure itself for its user or dweller.

Through operations available in fictional writing, the 'poetics of resonance' transformed the experiences I went through in São Paulo by re-enlivening them in ways to deliver a disconcerting understanding of the city.

From here on, a poetics of resonance, as I have named it, will be spread throughout the ethnography, hopefully replenishing aesthetically what already belongs to life itself. Although 'the gaps between us, like the gap between words and the world, can never be closed', the journey has been set out 'to cross the wide Sargasso Sea that separate us' from others and the wider world (Jackson 2013a:1). We will never reach 'the other shore'. As with Icarus in his wax wings, we are destined to fail but in our inevitable fall we find the very act that make us imperfectly human: 'a refusal to be bound by the conceptual categories, social norms, political orders, linguistic limits, historical divides, cultural bias, identity thinking, and conventional wisdom that circumscribe our everyday lives' (Jackson 2013a:2). It is this refusal that the act of writing may signify in itself.

CHAPTER 2

LIFE-JOURNEYS AND SINGULARITY

De perto, ninguém é normal.”¹¹

Caetano Veloso, *Vaca Profana*, 1986.

2.1 ETHNOGRAPHIC EMERGENCES OF INFINITE FACES

Bom Retiro, São Paulo, Brazil – 28 July 2014

Suddenly, I saw flames coming from the rear area of the neighbouring property. I shouted desperately but no one answered back and the smoke began to spread all over my area as

¹¹ Up close, no one is normal.

well. (...) I dashed out to the street to ring my neighbour's bell. I needed to know who was responsible for this.

This is the rough note I jotted down recounting how my neighbour Liu became a 'face' during fieldwork, and later a key research contributor to this ethnography, as will become apparent in Chapter 5.

In the previous chapter, a poetics of resonance was developed to embrace the mystery inherent to the people I met during fieldwork by amplifying these moments of unclear states in their lives-in-the-making. In basing this ethnographic experiment on Levinas's notion of the unattainability of the 'other', it is fundamental as well to disclose how people became methodologically tangible for this anthropological account.

For Levinas (1969), the 'other' is a metaphysical reference, irreducible to any thought I may try to apply in order to capture it. The other overwhelms me by all means and appears to me simply as a 'face'. The other is unreachable and its face is an appearance in the phenomenal order that goes beyond plastic forms, because the face is not a re-presentation of the other. A face is the evocation of the proximity between me and the other, a culmination of the ethical relationship that is instigated when 'the face summons me, calls for me, begs for me, and in so doing recalls my responsibility, and calls me into question' (Levinas 1989:83). The face of the other is unattainable, but elicits my relationship with the other as my neighbour, or as a fellow companion to whom I am committed in a transcendent relation, as the otherness of the other is absolute.

A person can be considered a presence of the face, however, an incomplete emergence of the face because a person cannot prevent herself or himself from 'showing through' her or his 'gestures, limbs, gaze, thought, skin'. Something always escapes from her or his figure, and in this way a person is also her or his 'caricature', because 'being is not only itself, it escapes itself' (Levinas 1989:135).

In short, a person is not able to make manifest completely the otherness of the other, but a person becomes an evocation of otherness: a 'reverberation' in my phrasing. In recognising the irreducibility of the other in my relationship with the absolute 'other', I am able to consider the unattainable otherness evoked by the presence of a person through her or his 'uniqueness', the 'irreducible excellence of the social in its proximity' (Levinas 1998:166). In the uniqueness of the expression of a face, I acknowledge the irreducibility of the other and I am able to observe what it means in terms of infinity.

The attempt to make the face of the other become tangible for the purposes of an ethnographic process is an irreconcilable operation. However, the face of the other *will* gain ethnographic emergence if methodological procedures are certain to respect the unattainability of

the other, and by ensuring that the notion of 'uniqueness' abides with the distinctiveness gained by people's life-courses in the world.

In this ethnographic endeavour, the irreducibility of the other as a 'face', concerning the categorisations usually applied in the study of international migrants (or anyone else), will gain methodological substance in discussions on 'cosmopolitanism'. Cosmopolitanism will provide a foundation that grounds human 'uniqueness' as the chief methodological given in conveying people's lives, respecting their incommensurability and their richness as 'faces'. This 'uniqueness' will be ethnographically derived from (my experience of) people's experience, and will be expressed through the notions of 'life-journeys' and 'singularity'. Let me elaborate on this 'cosmopolitan' foundation.

2.2 METHODOLOGICAL IRREDUCIBILITY THROUGH COSMOPOLITANISM

Since the Stoics and Cynics of the Ancient Greece coined the expression *kosmopolites*¹², the word has gained interpretations, usages and connotations in different historical contexts¹³. The words *cosmos* and *polites* were originally brought together by Diogenes. The first usually translated as the world or the universe; the second, as the membership to a specific society or community. The explicit tension between the terms still kindles considerations on how to coordinate universality and particularity together.

Lately, a myriad of definitions has exploded in many directions, pushing the concept throughout distinct approaches and bringing forth terms such as 'rooted cosmopolitanism' (Appiah 1997), 'vernacular cosmopolitanism' (Bhabha 1996 and Werbner 2006), 'banal cosmopolitanism' (Beck 2006), 'diasporic cosmopolitanism' (Glick-Schiller 2015), among others.

The cosmopolitanism that is able to provide resources to discuss ways to go beyond the limits of class, rank, national origin, ethnicity, or gender, and, therefore, to sustain proposals to avoid the imposition of prior categorisations over people, is the cosmopolitanism which maintains a concern with universal human capacities.

Kant is referred to as the first modern to theorise upon cosmopolitanism as concerning universal capacities and the idea of humankind. Kant's notion of cosmopolitanism regarded the human under two circumstances: as singular species; and as individual inhabitants on the same earth's surface. As species, human beings possessed capacities through which to perfect themselves, and so

¹² This Greek term is usually translated as 'citizen of the world'. Ron Stade (2014) claims it is more accurate and appropriate to the Greek ancient epoch in which the term was created to translate it as 'citizens of everything'.

¹³ See Inglis (2012) for alternative histories of the concept within Western thought; and Pollock (2002) for approximations of the notion of cosmopolitanism to non-Western traditions of thought.

to contribute to the development of humanity itself. As for individual inhabitants on the same earth's surface, Kant conceived a normative project to ensure people might live together, including the need for universal rights to be held by every human being, who is entitled, for instance, to obtain hospitality at any place in the world.

Inspired by this legacy, cosmopolitanism that has the human as its defining preoccupation is interested in the open-ness through which people are able to develop their own potentialities and overcome expectations of restraining sorts. It conceives, in short, of the human as locus of the development of capacities that enables people to move beyond social, political or cultural limits. Nussbaum believes that the humanities should 'begin with the human being: with the capacities and needs that join all humans, across barriers of gender and class and race and nation (1995:62). And Rapport claims:

Our nature includes, inter alia, the capacity to be open to the world, cosmopolitan – to transcend one's self, place and time; also the capacity to make spatial sense of specific environments; also the capacity to understand the norms that constitute the culture of particular places; also the capacity to satisfy one's desire for an autonomy necessary to uphold the values one has set oneself and to avoid loss of self-esteem; also the capacity to gain interpretative insight into other's aims and beliefs; also the capacity for communication and intuition; also the capacity to appreciate reciprocity and mutuality, symmetry, clarity and smoothness; also the capacity for hope and projection; and so on. Our nature is a plethora of capacities, an excessiveness, an overriding capacity to be open to the world and go beyond what is made out to be at present... (2010:3-4)

This sort of cosmopolitanism esteems the manifold ways people can develop their capacities to be in the world and with others, despite ascriptions of affiliation and classification. At times, these very categories of membership or attachment, such as class, ethnicity, nation, religion, or gender, can restrict people in their ways of living a fulfilled life.

For this reason, the appreciation of the human in a cosmopolitan outlook is not achieved by corroborating classificatory categories of affiliation or identification, for instance, 'the South Koreans', 'the Catholic Christians', 'the migrant women' or 'the Bolivian seamstresses'. In this way, the participants of this study were not selected under a single category, such as nationality, class, ethnicity or gender. In this account, there are men and women, working-class and middle-class people, some were born in Paraguay or South Korea, others in China or Bolivia. The only reference that unites them all is the fact that I met each of them directly or indirectly in the district of Bom Retiro. In one way or

another all of them demonstrated varying degrees of responsiveness towards matters concerning nationality and/or ethnicity—but this did not determine in my eyes (or theirs) their particular nature.

Acknowledging the predicaments of the ‘imponderabilia of actual life’, this research attempts not to be methodologically driven by categories of nation-state or social affiliations as structuring premises. The fundamental element of regard here is the uniqueness of a life’s course as the expression of the human experience in the world.

In this way, this ethnographic account is methodologically cosmopolitan: focused on the human through the ‘uniqueness’ of people’s lives. As Stade pinpoints, a research agenda based on a cosmopolitanism neither allows someone to be diminished by designations of class, ethnicity, religion, etc., nor allows someone ‘to be reduced to an alter ego or an object of knowledge’ (Rapport and Stade 2007:229). There can be no limits to the nature of the other and the requisite ethical attitude is to respect this irreducibility methodologically.

2.3 UNIQUENESS, SINGULARITY AND LIFE-JOURNEYS

For Levinas, ‘uniqueness’ is ‘precisely a *doing justice* to the difference of the other person’ (1998:166), because only the unique is absolutely other. In respecting the unique, no totalisation is imposed on the face of the other. In not grasping the other through representation, a way to the infinite is made possible.

Convergently, cosmopolitanism agrees with the significance of singularity in understanding people in the world – albeit not now aiming at infinity but at the human. As Rapport asserts, ‘the human comprises a complex singularity’ (2009:110). Paradoxically, the singularly human is manifested in the limiteless particularities that make an existence unique, holding the extraordinary (and mysterious) property of revealing the richness of the human capacities in the world.

In this ethnographic account, uniqueness/singularity will be made attainable through the comprehension of personal lives. This research effort relies on the many experiences of particular people with whom I was able to engage during fieldwork. People’s singularity was realised in the course of the numerous occurrences shared or lived with me when accompanying each of the participants of this research. I am defining this aggregation of experiences that renders a sense of singularity to someone’s existence as ‘life-journeys’. A ‘life-journey’, then, is the expression of the intersubjective relations established between me and a particular person, in which the experiences lived or shared with me provided means to identify the singularity of that person. In recognising the life-journeys of Mr.Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta, Mr. Soh, Liu and Helen, an access to what is to be

human in very singular ways is gained. In treading on their heels, geographies and senses of belonging were lived as a continuum attached to specific personal experiences and itineraries.

2.4 LIFE-JOURNEYS, EXPERIENCE AND INSTABILITY

Abu-Lughod, proposing new textual strategies to write 'against culture', claims 'ethnographies of the particular' to be 'instruments of tactical humanism' (1991:137). The life-journeys comprising this study were made existent through the experiences of particular persons: Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta, Mr. Soh, Liu and Helen. In attending to their particular experiences, life was lived in each case as something in-the-making; by reason of the fact that each destiny carried the impression that it was not finished and it was not able to rest. As Helen and Kitty enunciated in the previous chapter, each new circumstance required an original response, the rearrangement of a previous plan, the re-statement of disturbed positionings or the possibility of new horizons. The experiences lived by these people ascertained continually that the world is an uncertain and unstable place to be. Each of them was born in a different country but had now lived for some time (for several of them, a long time) in the city of São Paulo.

Dewey conceived of experiences as being 'what men do and suffer, what they strive for, love, believe and endure, and also how men act and are acted upon, the ways in which they do suffer, desire and enjoy, see, believe, imagine' (2008 [1925]:19). In considering these processes as constituents of reality, all inconsistencies, contradictions and ambiguities that are imbued in them and make the world a precarious and risky place to lead a life should be focussed upon if an accurate account of the human is to be attempted (Dewey 2008 [1925]: 21). Along the same lines, Jackson urges an anthropology that recognises that 'our relations with ourselves and with others [including material things and abstractions] are uncertain, constantly changing, and subject to endless negotiation.' (2013:9)

The lives illuminating this investigation expressed in varied degrees this inherent instability in life. This is the human constant to which Simmel designated the social form of 'the adventurer' and suggested as a synthesis 'between what we conquer and what is given to us' (1971 [1911]): 192), 'combining the elements of certainty and uncertainty in life (1971 [1911]):193). Simmel also highlights that it is precisely the unsteady quality constitutive of the adventurous that makes evident, by disruption, the presence of the 'interlocking of life-links', i.e., 'that feeling that those counter-currents, turnings, and knots still, after all, spin forth a continuous thread' (Simmel 1971 [1911]:188).

It is in this way that the lives of Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta, Mr. Soh, Liu and Helen are able to be made sense of in this ethnography: in the integrity of their tribulations, and once their experiences are held to be as a series of occurrences integrated in a personal life-course as life-journeys.

For Dewey (2008 [1925]), this succession of occurrences in the life of a being is called 'history'. Each life-event is at the same time the beginning of something and the ending of another, imparting a motion to existence and making it transitive and experimental. In this dynamic understanding of life as 'historical' process, temporality is an intrinsic trait of any occurrence. However, a temporal awareness of the interrelation between the facts of a life is not automatic. This interrelation is disturbed at every moment that a new fact is recognised, leading to a re-arrangement in understanding the sequence of a life. Consequently, a life history only achieves significance in the very aspect of uncertainty, contradiction and incongruity that is experienced in life itself, because it is through the vivid events of joy or suffering, delight or distress that a life-course can be actualised in its own terms.

Such occurrences are able to transform completely the understanding of previous experiences and the prospect of what lies ahead, reminding us that life is also a move into the unknown and the unexpected. Its intrinsic challenge may summon us to overcome existent assumptions or conventions, as Jackson (2015) proposes with the notion of 'limitrophes':

'I adapt the term *limitrophe* to describe, ethnographically and autobiographically, the life-giving potential of places, people, and powers that lie beyond the pale of our established lifeworlds and to show that existential vitality depends on going beyond what has been prescribed by custom, internalized as habit, or enshrined in received ideas of truth and reality.'
(Jackson 2015:6)

Evoking Dewey's idea of life history and Jackson's notion of limitrophe, the life-journeys I followed during 16 months of fieldwork gain further density. From now on, a 'life-journey' comprises *the stream of diverse and multiple experiences that a particular person shared with me* during the mentioned period, encompassing as well as *the ambiguities, roughness and inconsistencies involved in her or his daily struggle for life*. Some of the ambiguities, roughness and inconsistencies embedded in these life-journeys were only elicited by the imaginative operation of a poetics of resonance. As an admitted component of life-in-the-making, the moments of inarticulate expression, included for appreciation by a poetics of resonance, in fact, only make sense within the stream of events of a life-journey. Because, as Jackson's notion of limitrophe suggests, vitality emerges when life itself is

challenged at every moment it unfolds, uncovering the intrinsic potentialities of one's own experiences and involvements.

As a result, the emphasis in this intended heuristic composition between life-journeys and the poetics of resonance is not only on person or on events, but on the aggregated states and occurrences that a person was able to set in motion, keeping in mind the open-ness and limits of opportunities in life that, in the end, makes one's trajectory so unique.

'Limits' here do not refer to determinism of any sort - they refer to the situatedness of a being in the world, to its materiality (person, pebble, duck, etc) and locality (on earth, in Brazil, summer, May, 2016, teen, elder, Acosta family, Manchester United supporter, Orthodox Catholic, etc) . As a presence in the world, every being is specifically substantiated and made unique through its course. However, this situatedness is not a confinement – it can become restrictive in certain situations - but it is rather a positionality in the world. For instance, in Helen's case, her situatedness in being born in South Korea from parents who believed that a successful marriage for her should be to another Korean impressed on her life turbulences to be faced when she decided to get married to a non-Korean. In this way, a being is not *restricted* by its positionality, but it *may* suffer pressures of all kinds by occupying a particular position in the world. It lies within people's capacity to either agree with or resist these forces - with all the respective consequences for every such decision.

From the instability characterising life, it is admitted, as Levinas (1969) states, that every being and every event have something irreducible, indefinable and indescribable that is continually out of reach of any determination, scheme or system of knowledge or discourse - whether by the anthropologist or the individual research subject states. Only in this space of indeterminacy do potentialities in the motion of a life occur and can life-journeys constantly re-position and transform themselves. The unknown and the unknowable as elements of life offer great instability and uncertainties in someone's existence, but simultaneously they are also this incommensurable resource in which the new can be reached by the adventurer (Simmel 1971 [1911]:194) and life potentialities can be recognised as 'human capacities' (Rapport 2010).

In order to respect the presence of the irreducible in each life-journey, one needs to prevent the fixing of definitions of what person, event or world are in essentialist and atomistic terms and reserve space for fluctuating and uncompleted attainments in each life-course.

If something irreducible is implicated in the very process of existing furnishing the potentialities of making, re-making, transforming or inventing the course of a life, concomitantly, each life-journey is not able to unfold unendingly. In fact, each life-journey is situated within the possibilities of its own historicity and involvements. This does not mean that radical transformations or the break-

up of significant limits are not possible, it means that depending on the positioning of a person's life-journey, a person will need to spend more or less effort and resources to achieve certain life-goals.

Jackson (2005) regards this situatedness as a force field, describing it as 'lifeworlds', in which 'a constellation of both ideas and passions, moral norms and ethical dilemmas, the tried and true as well as the unprecedented, is a field charged with vitality and animated by struggle' (2005:7). In a somewhat similar way, Velho (1987) locates the individual in the so-called complex societies within a 'campo de possibilidades'¹⁴.

In the process of making a life-journey, the situatedness of a person is informed by certain determinants of a 'social field' in which she or he is immersed, conditioning the number or the quality of life possibilities, but each act experimented with by the same person is also able to change the configuration of these same forces in the social field that acts upon her or him. Certainly, this process is not free from tension, disappointment of expectations or suffering. Every gesture brings particular consequences, but every gesture is also charged with hopes of achievement and fulfilment.

In this way, each act or experience unravels such a specific concatenation of repercussions in a life-journey that each life-course gains a very singular outline. In this processual movement, this multiple tension between capacity, decision, social field and outcome, there is no chance of a life-journey to be the same as another. A life-journey is always unique.

The singularity of a life-journey is not the same as individualism or individuality. Individualism, as the specific historical and cultural conceptualisation of the person and self, corresponding to a particular ideology of a cultural tradition (Dumont 1986), was not the issue brought to light by the lives I followed. On the other hand, individuality as the ontological state of each person being constituted of an independent awareness and sentience that is dissimilar from the world and from other people (Rapport 1997a) is something constitutive of the singularity of life-journeys, but not a synonym for it.

Having reached this point, it may be more evident that the focus on life-journeys does not refer to 'biographies' in its common meaning, since what is portrayed in this anthropological account does not follow the integral development of a person's biological lifetime and only alludes to the ways in which people told me about and lived some of their experiences during the period of fieldwork I spent with each of them.

Likewise, the life story of each person portrayed in this account could not be deemed as a partial representation of an ethnic group (Shostak 1983) or a historical society (Elias 1993), given the singularity and irreducibility resulting from each life-journey that was shared with me. If there is a life

¹⁴ Portuguese: Field of possibilities.

story that the life-journeys gathered in this ethnography do share proximity with, it is Esperanza's story (Behar 1993), the 'translated woman' whose life near the border between Mexico and the United States was delicately and outstandingly brought into words in her own terms and uniqueness. The 'proximity', in other words, is a cosmopolitan one, not an ethnic or sociological one, born out of the similar conditioning of *human* lives across the globe.

Although the concentration on only one life-journey would be an option for this research effort, the choice to invest in multiple life stories was made, firstly, because it was what the fieldwork offered as experience, and, secondly, because it brings a different challenge to convey one singularity alongside other singularities.

In the following chapters, the life-journeys of Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta, Mr. Soh, Liu and Helen are all introduced by imaginative pieces created by the poetics of resonance. I chose to do so because, ultimately, the fictional segments were the core reference that culminated in organising my comprehension of the stream of experiences that each of these personal lives amounted to. The reader retains the possibility of going back to the imaginative fragments after reading each life-journey, in order to evaluate the degree in which the fictitious excursions are imbued by the particularities of each course.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning my decision to preserve the language(s) in which each person spoke to me as far as it was possible. I chose to proceed in this way to offer an indication of the multiplicity of languages at play during the research experience and also of the linguistic environment some of the people I followed were exposed to. The disadvantage to execute this in written form is that each life-journey will be permeated with excessive translating notes of the many speeches, possibly interrupting the textual flow. Besides this disturbing effect in the process of reading the text, I hope that the presence of the many languages in the ethnography at least opens up the varied textures present in the lives of the international migrants featured here.

PART II

CHAPTER 3

JOURNEYS OF BEING

The life-journeys grouped under the first heading, 'journeys of being', are ones in which people lived their life-courses in the city of São Paulo by relying mostly on a sense of ethnic belonging. This sense of ethnic belonging was not expressed as an 'ethnotheory' through discursive genres or ritualised instances; it was manifested through daily lived experiences that I was able to follow alongside Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee and Kitty. In these moments shared with me, references to nationality as basic orientation for everyday existence were at play – albeit each person undertook a particular rendering of what it was to be Korean or Paraguayan in Brazil. Considering the instability and variability that the allusion to belonging to a certain nationality held in these lives, I refer to it as 'Korean-ness', 'Bolivian-ness', 'Paraguayan-ness' or 'Brazilian-ness'.

3.1 WITH MR. KWON

Meow!

Anyonhaseyo¹⁵, kitten! Are you hungry?

Meow!

Life's not easy, is it? You're too skinny, poor kitten! You haven't been around for a while.

Where did you go?

Meow!

I know, you're starving. All these Paraguayans, they left you begging at the window, didn't they? They're all wicked people. Take this. Yes, good cat, good cat. Don't eat so fast, you'll choke. Would you like to try some squid? Today the customers didn't leave much beef on their plates. I like squid, you may also like it. Yes, good cat. What are you going to do when I leave? You know, I'm going to Korea in two years' time. You're so lonely. You should find another cat and have a family. Maybe you have already had one, have you? It's ok, have more squid.

This is how an episode I witnessed Mr. Kwon perform resonated in me. Mr. Kwon did not say those words, but through a poetics of resonance I restaged this scene, because it was this scene that moved me in the direction of understanding Mr. Kwon's generosity and openness in his own terms, making me aware of his complexity.

During many night shifts in Mr. Kwon's restaurant kitchen, a white cat tinged with grey hues meowed at one of the windows that led to a car park. The cat would insistently whine, but no one in the kitchen would pay attention to it - not the chief cook, nor my workmates. Though I also tried to ignore it, I found myself being affected by the kitten's loud cries. Each time that I asked about the cat, my co-workers would say they did not know or they ignored my question. After some time, the cat would leave. What a surprise on one of my last days in the restaurant when the cat meowed and Mr. Kwon was the one to feed it through the window.

This episode drew me to something very specific about Mr. Kwon, something not spoken, but enacted in the triviality of the act itself. I registered and amplified it through this operation of imagining it in the poetics of resonance. In order to fully comprehend its specificity in Mr. Kwon's

¹⁵ Greeting in Korean.

character and what was at play in this episode, it is necessary to describe the circumstances in which I met Mr. Kwon.

Bom Retiro, São Paulo, 13 December 2013. A tiny flower shop in Bom Retiro and the handwritten advertisement on its window: *Moça que mora no Bom Retiro, ½ período, Ajudante Geral*¹⁶. What may exist behind these words? Walking past cycas, small palm trees and other leafy vases, I found a slender man seated at a desk at the back of the shop. As I spoke to him in Portuguese, he squeezed his eyes, slightly surprised that I was interested in the post. In his accented Portuguese, he asked me one-word questions.

*Nome?*¹⁷

Simone.

*Idade?*¹⁸

36.

*Casada?*¹⁹

*Não, mas tenho um companheiro.*²⁰

*Filhos?*²¹

*Não.*²²

*Pode amanhã?*²³

Taken back by the request, I was not prepared to begin so promptly.

He added, *Sábado precisa.*²⁴

I proposed Monday at 9:30 and he agreed.

On Monday, the same man was pleased to see me back. He was alone again in the shop and asked me some of the same questions from our first meeting. This time, he maintained a modest smile while speaking.

Nome?

Simone.

Casada?

¹⁶ Portuguese: Girl who lives in Bom Retiro, part-time, shop assistant.

¹⁷ Portuguese: Name?

¹⁸ Portuguese: Age?

¹⁹ Portuguese: Married?

²⁰ Portuguese: No, but I have a partner.

²¹ Portuguese: Children?

²² Portuguese: No.

²³ Portuguese: Start tomorrow? (I tried to maintain the structure manifested in Portuguese in the translation, even though it may sound not totally correct)

²⁴ Portuguese: Saturday is needed.

*Não, mas moro com meu companheiro.*²⁵

*Onde?*²⁶

Três Rios.

*Ah, é perto... Tem filhos?*²⁷

Não.

*Tá doente?*²⁸ and he placed his right hand on his chest, simulating someone panting.

*Tenho problema no pulmão, mas não sou doente.*²⁹

*Pode integral?*³⁰

*Não, posso pelas manhãs.*³¹

*Tenho restaurante, precisa no restaurante. Pode à noite também?*³²

*Que período?*³³

*5 às 9.*³⁴

*Posso 5:30.*³⁵

The job interview ended abruptly and the slender man requested me to follow him. Mr. Kwon never introduced himself to me. He was the 'patrão'³⁶ and, thus, I only ever learned his name through the mentions that other employees made of him. I would always refer to him as 'senhor'³⁷.

We neared the front door and he switched the lights on and off, remarking *Primeiro, liga luz*³⁸. Then he handed me a worn-out broom, detailing that I should begin with the back room and the bathrooms at the rear. This was the place where Mr. Kwon lived. The room comprised a single bed in the middle, sink and cooker on the right side, and, on the left, a desk heaped with all sorts of papers, a huge flat screen TV and a small closed circuit TV. There were things piled up all over the room: packets of Korean sochu³⁹ and soy sauce, empty plastic bottles of water and soft drinks, clothes in a basket, shoes lining the stairs, and shirts hanging from the mezzanine. I began by moving items from

²⁵ Portuguese: No, but I live with my partner.

²⁶ Portuguese: Where?

²⁷ Portuguese: Ah, it's close by... Do you have children?

²⁸ Portuguese: Are you ill?

²⁹ Portuguese: I have a lung problem, but I am not ill.

³⁰ Portuguese: Could you work full time?

³¹ Portuguese: No, I can work during the morning.

³² Portuguese: I have a restaurant, I need staff for the restaurant. Can you work at night too?

³³ Portuguese: What time is the night shift?

³⁴ Portuguese: From 5 to 9.

³⁵ Portuguese: I can begin from 5:30.

³⁶ Portuguese: Boss.

³⁷ Portuguese: Sir.

³⁸ Portuguese: Firstly, turn on the light.

³⁹ Distilled alcoholic beverage made from rice, potatoes or other cereals.

their original places and sweeping the floor when I realised I needed a dustpan. When asked about it, Mr. Kwon searched around his place and the storage room. He then demanded that I follow him to a restaurant nearby. We went outdoors, and possibly because of my 'Asian'⁴⁰ features, he felt allowed to comment with me, *Aqui trabalha paraguaio, não é bom, mas não fala nada*⁴¹. He raised the restaurant's iron door. The front area of the restaurant was full of tables and chairs. The lights were off. There were people working at the back in the kitchen. Mr. Kwon called for Mrs. Lee and said a 'good morning' in Portuguese to the employees, a young man and a short woman. I assumed they were the Paraguayans I should not make comments about. He asked them for, *Aquilo pra pegar lixo*⁴². They seemed not to understand Mr. Kwon's request, so, I tried, *Uma pá de lixo*⁴³. The young man immediately gave one to Mr. Kwon, who passed it to me. A middle-aged lady arrived and I was introduced to Mrs. Lee. She and Mr. Kwon kept talking in a foreign language for some time, before we went back to the flower shop.

When I was finishing the work shift, Mr. Kwon said I was doing a good job and added, *Você parece coreana*⁴⁴. I smiled and thought it was a good opportunity to inquire whether he was from South Korea or not. He confirmed that he was and asked if I knew Korean food. I told him I had tried Bul-Go-Gui and Kimchi. He smirked and affirmed, *Você sabe bastante*⁴⁵.

In the night shift at the restaurant, Mr. Kwon greeted everyone in the kitchen in Portuguese and introduced me as 'Shimoni', the new Korean employee. It was interesting to hear my name with another accent, but I felt shaken by the statement that I was Korean and awkwardly mumbled that I was born in Brazil and had a Japanese father. For Mr. Kwon, ascribing to me the designation of being Korean was likely a compliment - I had been considerably flattered.

This idea of being Korean pervaded most of the moments I spent with Mr. Kwon. It was an applied notion of Korean-ness constantly summoned as a measure to morally judge people or situations. My conduct as a 'good' employee had prompted the attribution of Korean-ness to me, for instance.

⁴⁰ It is tricky to describe people's 'phenotypical' characteristics, because this assumedly directs to a form of racial categorisation, which this ethnography does not aim to reinforce. However, specific body elements were given deliberate attention in many speechless circumstances of my fieldwork. I chose to use the term Asian in quotes to refer to people like me, who would be identified as carrying bodily features of people assumed to being born in a country of the Asian continent, despite this not being the case. For instance, I was born in Brazil and will be considering myself in the thesis as having an 'Asian' physiognomy.

⁴¹ Portuguese: Here, there are Paraguayans working, it's no good, but don't say anything.

⁴² Portuguese: That thing to take dirty.

⁴³ Portuguese: A dustpan.

⁴⁴ Portuguese: You seem to be Korean.

⁴⁵ Portuguese: You know a lot.

At the same time, it was equally manifest that everything dissimilar from this Korean-ness would have different degrees of derogative consideration. Paraguayans were regarded as not being 'good' by him, but it was acceptable to employ them. Brazilians, well, Brazilians...

17 December 2013. Flower wreathes were ordered and Mr. Kwon requested Mrs. Lee's help. As she was too busy in the restaurant's kitchen, she sent me instead during one of my night shifts. I left the restaurant and found Mr. Kwon in the flower shop working around a wooded plant support approximately two metres in height. I followed him to the industrial fridges from which he collected the flowers and foliage to be used: white arum, white chrysanthemum, tiny yellow primulas. He asked me to bring the floral foams he had already immersed in water and to peel off the excess leaves from the white arum stalks. The dried foliage was spread out as background on the support and Mr. Kwon anchored the foam at three different levels. I handed Mr. Kwon the flowers one by one. While he inserted them according to his design plans, he asked me, *Namorado brasirero?*⁴⁶ I confirmed. Mr. Kwon grimaced and commented, *Brasirero é tudo marandro*⁴⁷: *casa, faz filho e larga*.⁴⁸ I told him that my partner was not a reprobate and that there might be many good Brazilian people, I was Brazilian too. Mr. Kwon gestured for another chrysanthemum and continued, *Como conheceu namorado?*⁴⁹ I passed the flower and replied that my partner and I had a common friend. Mr. Kwon inserted the flower stalk in the foam and kept asking, *Quem gostou primeiro?*⁵⁰ I paused with this peculiar question and ended up saying that both of us liked each other at the same time.

I wonder whether this reverse anthropology (Wagner 1981) that Mr. Kwon practiced with me had produced any impact on his thoughts about Brazilians or Koreans. In trying to understand me, he allowed me to know his perceptions of the people around him. No wonder I learned in great detail how his sense of Korean-ness severely contrasted with his sense of Brazilian-ness. In this way, if I am a 'good person', I can only be Korean in all likelihood, never Brazilian. He was not able to acknowledge I was Brazilian too. I could not be Korean, as I have already declared, but certainly I was not Brazilian for him; I was Japanese at least, which held the 'Asian' sense of my being.

However, in many moments, his notion of Korean-ness seemed to be only possible by combating ferociously what he considered Brazilian-ness. On the morning of 17 December 2013, the butcher's delivery clerk rang the flower shop door, as the restaurant was still closed. The clerk reported to Mrs. Lee that he had brought the new beef order but the debt from the previous one

⁴⁶ Portuguese: Brazilian boyfriend? (I tried to maintain the accented pronunciation that was manifested in Portuguese in the translation, even though it may sound orthographically or grammatically awkward).

⁴⁷ The term 'malandro' in Brazil is a popular connotation for people who rely on informal arrangements. At times, the figure of the 'malandro' is associated to a sort of trickster.

⁴⁸ Portuguese: Brazilians are all reprobates: they get married, make babies and leave you.

⁴⁹ Portuguese: How did you meet boyfriend?

⁵⁰ Portuguese: Who liked first?

should be paid first. Mrs. Lee commanded, *Trazer carne primeiro, depois paga*⁵¹. The delivery clerk left the shop, took a package of about 30 kilos of beef from a bicycle and came to the desk where Mrs. Lee was sitting. She told him, *Deixa carne, paga depois*⁵². The young man replied that it was his boss' instruction to collect the payment due or he would be obliged to take the package back. Mrs. Lee called Mr. Kim by phone. The clerk, having decided to keep the package and return later, tried to leave, but Mrs. Lee would not open the electronic door for him. He begged her to let him out while Mrs. Lee remained silent. Mr. Kwon arrived, opening the door with his keys. As he entered the shop, he complained that the butcher's delivery did not match his expectations and proposed that he leave the package. He would pay for it later and would offer 'caixinha'⁵³ to the clerk. The clerk refused it vehemently, *Eu não quero caixinha. Meu patrão mandou e eu só faço o que meu patrão manda, é ele que paga meu salário*⁵⁴. Aggressively, Mr. Kwon yelled at the young man, reproaching him for not being polite. Again Mr. Kwon insisted on paying the 'caixinha'. The clerk refused. Mr. Kwon accused the man, *Você não está falando direito*⁵⁵, and requested to talk to the clerk's boss. The clerk phoned his boss, repeating out loud that his boss had identified Mr. Kwon's outstanding debts. The clerk hung up the phone, saying that his boss had told him to receive the due payments; otherwise the beef would not be left. Mr. Kwon yelled again at the clerk, affirming that the man was creating the situation and could not be trusted. Mr. Kwon required to speak to the boss directly. The delivery clerk phoned to his boss again. This time Mr. Kwon picked up the phone and complained that the beef delivery had not been executed properly. I do not know exactly what was said but when Mr. Kwon hung up the phone, there was silence. Then, he and the clerk were signing papers. Mr. Kwon must have paid all the money due, because the clerk went away a few moments later, leaving the beef order.

In this tricky drama, it was quite ambiguous the way Mrs. Lee and Mr. Kwon insisted on paying for the order later whilst offering the clerk a casual 'caixinha'. Although they were the ones holding debts, the situation was played out as if the clerk was being dishonest and creating problems by not delivering what was ordered. At first glance, it seemed a gratuitous scene of abuse. Or perhaps it was a tale in which a clerk should never accuse a boss of not making payments, a boss should be called to account only by another boss. Nevertheless, from this day on, I realised how Mr. Kwon and Mrs. Lee experienced their relationships with non-Koreans as a continuous source of suspicion and distrust.

Language could be blamed for some misunderstandings but the overall impression was that Mr. Kwon and Mrs. Lee were constantly struggling against people considered non-Koreans.

⁵¹ Portuguese: Bring beef first, then pay.

⁵² Portuguese: Leave beef, pay later.

⁵³ Informal expression for tip.

⁵⁴ Portuguese: I don't want 'caixinha'. My boss asked me to do it this way and I only do what my boss tells me to. He is the one who pays my wage.

⁵⁵ Portuguese: You are not speaking correctly.

Paraguayans could be handled, but Brazilians were believed to be self-evidently vile. Korean-ness, in this menacing context, was the safe resource to resort to when establishing any kind of relationship, convivial or professional. In my interactions with Mr. Kwon, I continually sensed that he experienced the city of São Paulo as a highly threatening place. When narrating my experiences with Mrs. Lee, this will appear in another fashion.

This framework of morally classifying people according to nationality was frequently evoked in my routine with Mr. Kwon and Mrs. Lee as a means to identify and judge people in order to reduce possible risks concerning the management of their lives. For example, after I had been working at the flower shop and the restaurant for some weeks, the advertisement for a shop assistant was still in the window. On the morning of 19 December 2013, I was filling buckets with water, when a young black woman opened the shop door asking about the position. She had not even reached Mr. Kwon's desk. He simply dismissed her, saying, *Já preencheu vaga*⁵⁶. It was a contradictory assertion, as Christmas was approaching and all the Paraguayan workers in the restaurant were to travel to Paraguay and return only after New Year's Day. I could not know entirely whether race would influence Mr. Kwon's judgement, but certainly the young black girl was considered Brazilian. In order to prevent any of the risks that Mr. Kwon associated with Brazilians, the girl was denied any possibility of applying for the job. Many months later, Kitty – another employee in the restaurant, featured later in the thesis – would explain that Mr. Kwon and Mrs. Lee refrained from hiring Brazilians because they had been taken to court twice by Brazilian workers for not following Brazilian labour regulations.

Indeed, the jobs in the flower shop and the restaurant did not follow formal procedures: there were no written contracts and I wondered whether the businesses were even registered within the city council. There was an informal condition underlying all labour relations established by Mr. Kwon and Mrs. Lee: everything would be agreed orally and in general terms; no job duration would be defined, the first month was considered a try-out period; the initial monthly wage was R\$ 850 (≈ £149) for full-time work, ranging around 8-9 hours/day or R\$ 450 (≈ £90) for part-time work of around 4 hours/day with no mention of social security benefits; employees had a day-off during the week according to the businesses demands; everyone worked both in the restaurant and the flower shop without any specific activity assigned.

Under these conditions, innumerable instabilities affected both employers and employees. With no formal commitments tying them to work and the low wage offered, many employees worked only for some weeks, quitting as soon as they could find another better paid activity. This impacted immensely on the work routine and required constant rearrangement on a daily basis. The only permanent staff were the employers who were deeply involved, not only in the management, but also

⁵⁶ Portuguese: The post has been already taken.

directly in the making of meals and flower arrangements. Both Mr. Kwon and Mrs. Lee cooked or arranged flowers (Mr. Kwon was more dedicated to the flower shop, whereas Mrs. Lee devoted her attentions to the restaurant). They were not married or living together. Mr. Kwon lived at the back of the flower shop and Mrs. Lee above the restaurant. They had mostly a professional relationship. In any case, Mr. Kwon was considered the 'patrão'⁵⁷, who would have the final word on every topic and would make the payments. Through my experiences with Mrs. Lee, a better picture of these informalities at play will be offered below.

For the moment, suffice it to say that the instabilities and precariousness embedded in Mr. Kwon's and Mrs. Lee daily work lives, as well as their notions of Korean-ness, Paraguayan-ness or Brazilian-ness were profoundly associated with their sense of living in a hostile and unstable work atmosphere. In this scenario, these categories had the primary force to guide their life-journeys and give a certain rationality to their life choices.

In Mr. Kwon's life-journey, Korean-ness grounded many aspects of his life. For instance, both of his businesses were aimed exclusively at Korean customers living in the city. Non-Koreans only arrived at the restaurant or the flower shop accompanying Korean people. Korean-ness was also his future life, the fulfilment of a goal, as Mr. Kwon's life in Brazil was imagined as an interval between his previous life in South Korea and his return in two years' time. The time spent in Brazil was deemed a temporary period in his life plans. How upsetting it was to learn, during that same occasion in which I assisted him with the floral wreath, that he had been living in Brazil for more than 20 years. It was a 'provisional' period of more than 20 years in his life, still under way. And what were the precious ties worth such effort? Family? Mr. Kwon completed the first foam with white chrysanthemum and replied, *Eu não mais casado, mas tem duas filhas em Coréia*⁵⁸. He pressed the stalks in and added, *Tenho filha de 18 e 25 anos*⁵⁹. Why did he choose to live in Brazil? *Esposa tinha irmão aqui*⁶⁰. And since then, Mr. Kwon has been living in Brazil struggling to remain Korean for a future envisioned in South Korea.

However, Mr. Kwon's way of developing his Korean-ness in São Paulo was peculiar, compared to other stereotypes of Korean men living in the city: he dedicated himself to two activities usually attached to female roles, cooking and arranging flowers; he did not display wealth through fashionable cars or golf club sets; and he would be considered too old - he was in his late fifties - to get married again to a Korean female. From the customers' behaviour in the restaurant and the flower shop, it was constantly implied that his job was to serve them. Often Mr. Kwon would order employees to

⁵⁷ Portuguese: Boss.

⁵⁸ Portuguese: I am not married anymore, but I have two daughters in Korea.

⁵⁹ Portuguese: My daughters are 18 and 25 years old.

⁶⁰ Portuguese: Wife had a brother here.

stop what they were doing and move to a less useful activity, such as chopping spring onions that had already been chopped or cleaning tables that had already been cleaned, in order to make visible to customers that he was the boss there. In striving to keep his Korean-ness respectable before others considered Korean, Mr. Kwon relied on the authority he had over non-Koreans. However, this authority was always provisional in the sense that the precarious labour situation of his businesses would generate an unstable and inconstant presence of employees.

On 27 December 2013, I was the only worker in the restaurant and Mr. Kwon designated me the task of serving the customers' tables. The restaurant was not so busy, as the Christmas holiday was still spreading its effects. Two couples on one of the tables got interested in me, when they realised I did not speak Korean. They would request a beverage or more *panch'an*⁶¹ portions only to ask me questions, such as my name, whether I was Japanese or lived in Bom Retiro. Later that night, while I was dishwashing, one of the male customers from this table visited the kitchen in order to praise Mrs. Lee for my services and to give me a R\$ 10 tip (≈ £2). The customer declared in his accented Portuguese that he would return to the restaurant only because of me. Then, he asked if I was working for 'temporada'⁶², because he would be interested in giving me a permanent job when I finished it. He left the tip and his business card on the kitchen worktop. Mrs. Lee handed them to me, but Mr. Kwon suddenly began yelling in Korean at the customer, arguing loudly and expelling him from the kitchen. Unfortunately I could not understand a word but certainly Mr. Kwon might have considered that his status as my boss and employer had been challenged by the customer's offer.

The precariousness of Mr. Kwon's businesses not only threatened to undermine his potential prestige before other Koreans, it also made his own daily routine irregular. Countless times, one employee or another failed to come to work and Mr. Kwon took the job of serving tables or preparing meals. Almost every night in the restaurant, workers would all leave around 11 pm and Mr. Kwon would continue serving customers with Mrs. Lee. The following morning, gathering the dirty plates and glasses left on the tables, I would ask him what time he had finished working and he would say that it was around 2-3 am. And he would go to bed in the flower shop backroom, among mountains of paper, bottles, and the live images from the front door and the restaurant kitchen on the CCTV.

Mr. Kwon's sense of Korean-ness may have provided him a certain level of certainty and integrity. Korean-ness for securing his life as Korean in South Korea in the future. Korean-ness for asserting how to be Korean during a provisional period in a country he did not feel was his. In living his stay in São Paulo as a temporary presence, he preferred not to invest in formal and durable

⁶¹ Small portions of food served along with cooked rice in Korean cuisine, meant to be finished at each meal and replenished during the meal if not enough.

⁶² Portuguese: summer job.

business relations in Brazil or to have a structured and comfortable house of his own. His routine in Bom Retiro was mostly absorbed by work in the restaurant and the flower shop. He would not have time to go to church, as many South Korean families in the neighbourhood did on Sundays. While the majority of the restaurants that specialised in Korean food were closed on Sundays, Mr. Kwon's was one of the few that opened. The Korean-ness Mr. Kwon enlivened was a keen effort to make his life-journey coherent in very precarious and unstable conditions. The price of this coherence was the need to assert an ethnic specificity against any other, this built categorical and moral boundaries that insulated him in a 'Korean world' in São Paulo that did not offer him the satisfaction of being an esteemed member, nor the chance to have a second Korean spouse, nor the free time to share religious bonds or leisure moments. His Korean-ness only signalled the possibility of living a worthy life in the future, when he would accomplish his desire to return to South Korea.

In any case, Mr. Kwon's Korean-ness was lived in São Paulo as constantly being endangered by non-Korean-ness. Everything outside this Korean-ness would gain repute only by extending the attribution of Korean-ness to it, as Mr. Kwon attempted to do in my case. Despite his fierce effort to keep being considered Korean in an antagonist fashion, micro-fissures in his armoured categorisation of people were revealed to me by the fortuitous occurrence highlighted through the poetics of resonance.

Going back to the episode in which he fed the cat, I identified something very specific in Mr. Kwon that saved me from endorsing any tempting operation of placing his experience in a general and abstract category - as a coherent exemplification of Korean ethnicity that would demand his depersonalisation.

Through the poetics of resonance, I hope to have amplified this unspoken, but enacted experience in Mr. Kwon's life in which establishing relations with non-human creatures, such as the cat, allowed him to set up an empathic regard towards non-Korean-ness.

Meow!

Anyonhaseyo, kitten! Are you hungry?

Meow!

Life's not easy, is it? You're too skinny, poor kitten! You haven't been around for a while.

Where did you go?

Meow!

I know, you're starving. All these Paraguayans, they left you begging at the window, didn't they? They're all wicked people. Take this. Yes, good cat, good cat. Don't eat so fast, you'll choke. Would you like to try some squid? Today the customers didn't leave much beef on their plates. I like squid, you may also like it. Yes, good cat. What are you going to do when I leave? You, know, I'm going to Korea in two years' time. You're so lonely. You should find another cat and have a family. Maybe you have already had one, have you? It's ok, have more squid.

*

Shop assistant, part-time, living in Bom Retiro.

Name?

Meow!

Sorry, name?

Meow!

Age?

Meow!

Married?

Meow!

Ok, ok. Come with me.

Jjamppong⁶³. I heat up the wok with a glug of soybean oil, adding the garlic and ginger I asked Nalva to finely chop. I stir them until light brown. Meanwhile, I had already directed Simone to mix together some tablespoons of hot pepper flakes with some soybean oil, blending them into a paste-like consistency. I like it spicy, customers usually like it this way. I set this aside for a while. Then, I add in the roughly chopped spring onion Nalva has handed me, and the pieces of squid, shrimp, and mussels I cleaned and stored earlier in the fridge. I keep stirring everything over high heat for some time. After pouring the red pepper paste, assuring that everything is coated in it, I add the pork stock prepared the day before, and leave it to boil for a while. In a sauce pan, I simmer portions of noodles apart. With a spoon, I check the soup seasoning and ask Simone to fetch me the salt, fish sauce, and ground black pepper stored on the shelves. When the noodles are soft and chewy, I pour them over the seafood soup and leave them simmering briefly. To finish the preparation, I drizzle sesame oil over the top and transfer everything to a large tin bowl, sprinkling some chopped scallions and coriander over it. Then, it's ready to go to the customer's table. Yes, some people prefer to use kelp and anchovy stock, but I like it this way. It's not kelp or anchovy that make this dish Korean, it is me that makes it Korean. Cooking is not only gathering ingredients and heating them on the cooker. Nalva can't cook Korean food. Simone can't cook Korean food. They don't know what the taste of it is, they aren't able to appreciate it. I can cook Korean food because I was nurtured with Korean food and I know what the taste of it is. It is the taste that makes you Korean. You need to be Korean to know how to transform the produce of this pitiful country into Korean food. Do you know that restaurant on Correia de Melo Street, the one with the glass door? The food there is not Korean, there are only Brazilians cooking in its kitchen. Can you believe it? It's not Korean food anymore. This is the reason Koreans don't go there anymore, only Brazilians. My food is Korean, because I'm Korean and my food is only for Koreans.

Every meal in Mr. Kwon's restaurant passed through Mrs. Lee's hands. The physicality of her presence in the kitchen resonated in me this imagined speech, as no explanation was provided for the way she organised the activities in the kitchen. Only by going through this exercise in the poetics of resonance was I able to become aware of how the making of food in itself was a key element in Mrs. Lee's daily life, reinforcing a Korean-ness to be contrasted with Paraguayan-ness, Brazilian-ness and so on. In uncovering this possible understanding of Mrs. Lee's cooking philosophy in the restaurant, I was able to make sense of her personal pride in being the chef there, a pride very specifically asserted as I will show below .

⁶³ Seafood noodle soup very popular in South Korea

Bom Retiro, São Paulo, 16 December 2013. *Señora*⁶⁴, *haemul pajeon*⁶⁵. This is how Alfonso announced the customer's order to Mrs. Lee over the kitchen counter. Mrs. Lee took a deep silver basin and while roughly cutting fresh spring onions, requested of me, *Huevos, cuatro*⁶⁶. She made gestures to me to beat the eggs and took pieces of shrimp, squid and shellfish from the fridge. Gathering all the ingredients, she added flour, seasoned it with a pinch of salt, soy sauce, chopped red pepper and mixed everything together. Then, lighting up one of the cooker's rings and placing a frying pan there, she asked me, *Nascido aquí?*⁶⁷ I confirmed. Drizzling some soy oil on the pan surface, she continued, *Japonés?*⁶⁸. Yes, my father was from Japan. She poured in the batter from the basin, *Casada?*⁶⁹ I replied that I was not married but lived together with my partner. She looked perplexed while flipping the pancake, *Por que vivir junto?*⁷⁰ I smiled and she herself added, *Después casa, no?*⁷¹ I kept smiling. The pajeon was almost ready and she yelled to me, *Tijeras!*⁷² I could not find the scissors around the kitchen, I looked on the worktop and the shelves. Mrs. Lee got impatient, *Tijeras! Donde están las tijeras?*⁷³ Nalva brought the scissors to her and the pajeon was split on a large plate to be served. When the dish had been rushed to the customer's table, I asked Mrs. Lee whether she was married. She laughed loudly, *Eeeh, casamento, muito tempo, eu com 61 anos, tem filho com 45 e 32 anos*⁷⁴. I enquired if her sons were living in Brazil. She emphasized, *Non, eles na Coréia.*⁷⁵ Then, how long had she been living in Brazil. She replied, *Eu moro Brasil 12, 13 anos, mas morou Paraguai 15 anos*⁷⁶.

Mrs. Lee was the chief cook and manager of Mr. Kwon's restaurant. She was the one responsible for hiring the workforce and probably, because of her experience in Paraguay, was used to employing people from Paraguay. The working language in the kitchen was mostly Spanish. Mrs. Lee spoke in a sort of Korean-accented Spanish that sometimes I was not able to understand immediately. Besides her familiarity with languages and nationalities, she held an assertive sense of Korean-ness reflected in the way the restaurant was managed.

Korean was spoken among Mrs. Lee, her mother, Mr. Kwon and the customers. Her mother had arrived recently from South Korea in order to spend some months in São Paulo. At times, Mr. Lee's mother stayed in the kitchen for brief moments

Similar to Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee grouped people according to categories of nationality (such as Koreans, or Brazilian) associating them with degrees of moral character. On 17 December 2013, at the

⁶⁴ Spanish: Madam.

⁶⁵ Korean pancake-like dish made from a batter of green onions, eggs, rice flour, wheat flour, and seafood.

⁶⁶ Spanish: Eggs, four.

⁶⁷ Spanish or Portuguese, it can be the same: Born here?

⁶⁸ Spanish: Japanese?

⁶⁹ With Spanish accent: Married?

⁷⁰ Spanish: Why do you live together?

⁷¹ Spanish: Then, you will get married, won't you?

⁷² Spanish: Scissors.

⁷³ Spanish: Where are the scissors?

⁷⁴ Portuguese mixed with Spanish, Português: Eeeh, marriage, long time ago, I'm 61 years old, my children are 45 and 32 years old.

⁷⁵ Português: No, they're in Korea.

⁷⁶ Português: I have been living Brazil 12, 13 years, but lived in Paraguay 15 years.

end of our morning shift, Mrs. Lee declared that the Brazilian girl who worked at the restaurant that day had been dismissed because she was considered lazy. It was her first and only day of work. Mrs. Lee explained that she had watched the CCTV images of the restaurant's kitchen from Mr. Kwon's room and caught the girl doing nothing, standing idly. Here Mrs. Lee mimed the girl in derogatory body movements: she crooked her waist sideways and swung her arms loosely. This was the bodily illustration of Brazilian laziness that could not fit her requirements, *Ah, brasiseros...*⁷⁷ Despite possible misinterpretations, the girl was not given any chance to be understood. She was instantaneously placed in the general category of Brazilians, for whom indolence was an obvious trait. For Mrs. Lee, no further elucidation was necessary: the girl matched her understanding of Brazilian-ness as the nationality at the bottom of her moral scale.

However, the greatest indication of Mrs. Lee's method of categorising people came in the form of the surveillance apparatus installed to select who was allowed to enter the restaurant. The entrance had a heavy electronic barred door monitored with a CCTV camera that sent live images to a small screen in the kitchen and to Mr. Kwon's room. Potential customers had to ring the bell and staff would press the switch to open the door. During my night shift on 17 December 2013, the doorbell rang and the CCTV image showed that people at the door did not have 'Asian' features. Mrs. Lee commanded Alfonso to inform them that the food was finished, the restaurant was closing. Alfonso went back to the kitchen and clarified that these people were looking for flowers. Mrs. Lee simply stated, *Loja flor cerrada*⁷⁸. Later, the doorbell rang again and I was close to the switch. I asked Mrs. Lee whether I could open the door. She warned me, *Antes de abrir, tem que olhar*⁷⁹, pointing to the CCTV screen and remarking, *Se brasileiro não abre, brasileiro marandro. Se boliviano, pergunta*⁸⁰. And she reinforced, *Antes de abrir, pergunta pra mim*⁸¹. Then, realising that my participation would be useless, she concluded, *Não, deixa, eu abre*⁸².

The restaurant's barred door was a device to physically secure the control of people entering the restaurant. People with 'Asian' features would be granted easy access as supposed 'Koreans'. People imagined as 'Bolivians' would need further scrutiny before being allowed to enter. But those considered 'Brazilians' had their access immediately denied and were dismissed with lies and excuses. The physicality of the barred door required the exercise of classifying people through supposed ethnic bodily characteristics, which Mrs. Lee had apparently mastered. In this simplified visual scheme of classification, people had to fit one of three categories: Koreans, Bolivians, or Brazilians. This operation of attributing visual nationality should be done instantaneously in order to substantiate the decision of whether or not to open the door. I asked Mrs. Lee how I should proceed if the person was Chinese, she responded, *Abre porta*⁸³. Peruvian? She answered, *Pergunta*⁸⁴. And Brazilians who are Japanese descendants? She got impatient and exclaimed, *Aaah!*, leaving without a reply my pestering questions.

⁷⁷ Portuguese: Ah, Brazirians...

⁷⁸ Português: Flower shop closed.

⁷⁹ Portuguese: Before opening it, you have to look.

⁸⁰ Portuguese: If Brazilian, don't open it. Brazirians, scoundrels. If Bolivian, ask me.

⁸¹ Portuguese: Before opening, ask me.

⁸² Portuguese: No, leave it, I open it.

⁸³ Portuguese: You open the door.

⁸⁴ Português: You ask me.

Together with Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee shared this sense of classifying people according to certain nationalities, imbuing them with moral standards in which Korean-ness would be the highest value in this scale, and Brazilian-ness, the lowest. This conceptualisation was literally turned into a mechanism that Mrs. Lee was responsible for administering. Simultaneously, the surveillance apparatus and the barred door materially exposed this perception of living in a menacing environment, where Korean-ness played the substantial role of assuring certain rationality and order in an endangered world. The assertion of such Korean-ness was constantly contrasted to all kinds of non-Korean-ness.

Food was another element through which Korean-ness was continually asserted and contrasted with non-Korean-ness in the restaurant. For instance, employees would never eat the Korean food included on the menu, probably because it contained expensive ingredients, but also because Mrs. Lee believed non-Koreans would not appreciate it. Instead, she gave money to one of the employees to go to the nearest supermarket and buy the ingredients for the employees' meals. Then, she would allow us to season and cook our own meals in the kitchen as we wished. The only food considered Korean that the employees had access to was the *panch'an* portions. Again, assumptions of ethnic inclination were enacted, through the way employees served from the *panch'an* food. In my case, Mrs. Lee attributed Japanese-ness to me, as she was unable to consider me Brazilian. She knew I was born in Brazil, but preferred to rely on my Japanese background. In this way, she could make correspondences between my Japanese-ness and her Korean-ness, but could also maintain a certain distance between them. While cooking slices of beef for the employees' meals on 17 December 2013, Mrs. Lee offered us the choice of picking any of the *panch'an* portions as side dishes. I took some marinated burdock and bean jelly, food that my workmates would never eat. She chuckled and commented to her mother, *Ela conhece*⁸⁵, acknowledging within me affinities of 'Asian' tastes. Yet, unlike Mr. Kwon, she would not extend Korean-ness to any one, as Mr. Kwon tried to do with me. This was one example of how the distinction between Mrs. Lee's Korean-ness, my Japanese-ness, and the Paraguayan-ness of my workmates was posited routinely in the kitchen through food consumption.

Though the existence of such boundaries was constantly reinforced in the restaurant's routine, Mrs. Lee also had a specific approach to bridge the gap between Korean-ness and non-Korean-ness in the scheme she managed. In order to make the non-Korean-ness of the people she employed engage with the moral standards of her Korean-ness, she would invest in what she called '*compromisso*'⁸⁶.

Compromisso was the personal process in which Mrs. Lee built labour relationships in time and through experience with those considered non-Korean. In this unstable and precarious work environment, in which there was not a formal procedure to guarantee the bonds between employers and employees, *compromisso* turned out to be the way Mrs. Lee grounded labour relations—effected through the establishment of personal and emotional relations. Mrs. Lee was always eager to get to know the routine and family details of her workers, as she amused herself chatting with us in the

⁸⁵ Portuguese: She knows.

⁸⁶ Portuguese. This is a very specific expression that could be translated as engagement or commitment, but I feel that the best translation for Mrs. Lee's use of the expression is 'trust'.

kitchen or requesting a hug when we arrived or left the restaurant. Certainly, this proximity also produced a kind of panoptic control over the employee's time and life, that sometimes could be used in the benefit of the restaurant's needs. But, in engaging with Mrs. Lee through this process, the employee was made a person of trust and would gain personality and respect in time. Based on the course of the employee's attendance at work, *compromisso* had an accumulative quality and would even reach those related to the person being granted trust.

On the night shift of 17 December 2013, Wilson arrived at the restaurant around 19:00. Mr. Kwon complained that he was extremely late, but Mrs. Lee greeted him animatedly, asking how his brother and sister were and remarking: *Claudio y Candida son gente de compromiso, trabajan bien*⁸⁷. When Wilson laced up his apron and joined me to peel garlic, I introduced myself to him and asked how long he had been working in the restaurant. He told me, *Poco más de una semana*⁸⁸. I was surprised and enquired how he contacted the owners. He replied, *Mis hermanos han trabajado aquí*⁸⁹, and added, *Pero ahora mi hermano tiene oficina*⁹⁰. Wilson was the younger brother of the two former employees that Mrs. Lee particularly respected and still held in high regard. Wilson was appointed by his sister but was not interested at staying in the restaurant. However, that night, because of Wilson's presence, Mrs. Lee cooked rump steaks for all the employees.

Through *compromisso*, the employees were also able to secure their job in the precariousness of the restaurant's routine. With no formal bonds attaching them to work, they were also free to leave at any moment. The Christmas holidays were approaching and all my workmates planned to spend at least two weeks in their hometowns in Paraguay, informing Mrs. Lee only of their dates of departure and arrival. Due to Mrs. Lee's perception of living in an insecure environment, *compromisso* was a way to balance the risks of such a world. The *compromisso* developed with employees was esteemed and these workers would have their positions again if they returned after Christmas. In this way, personal trust gained through time was a value highly appreciated such that even when the employees left the restaurant's work they would be trustworthy enough to recommend relatives, friends or acquaintances to Mrs. Lee.

However, *compromisso* was something that only Mrs. Lee dispensed to employees, because on 3 January 2014 when I mentioned I would like to quit the restaurant's work, she was disappointed, declaring, *Você não tem compromisso*⁹¹, and reinforced with, *Sem compromisso, assim não quer*⁹².

Although *compromisso* mediated the Korean-ness and non-Korean-ness in Mrs. Lee's daily life, it did not change the categorical difference attributed to the workers, it only offered a possible manner to accommodate non-Korean-ness with Korean-ness during a period that Mrs. Lee also envisaged as provisional. Similar to Mr. Kwon, she intended to return to South Korea in the future.

⁸⁷ Portuñol: Claudio and Candida are people of *compromisso*, they work well.

⁸⁸ Spanish: (It's been) more than a week.

⁸⁹ Spanish: My siblings worked here.

⁹⁰ Spanish: But now my brother runs an 'oficina'. Oficinas' are the outsourced small businesses for the sewing stage in the clothing industry in Bom Retiro. They are usually featured in mass media as 'sweatshops'.

⁹¹ Portuguese: You don't have *compromisso*.

⁹² Portuguese: Without *compromisso*, this way I don't want.

She did not mention an exact date, but she was sure that she would spend the rest of her life there after leaving Brazil, *Eu voltar Coreia*.⁹³

In Mrs. Lee's life-journey, Korean-ness, as for Mr. Kwon, was something fundamental from which to orientate herself towards others in a world necessarily unstable and dangerous. Paraguay and Brazil were considered stages in her trajectory towards a life to be lived in South Korea. With a broken marriage and children raised away from her in South Korea, she had spent almost 30 years abroad. The Korean-ness she vivified in São Paulo was a Korean-ness that assured that she would continue being Korean in the precarity of these intermediate periods away from South Korea.

This Korean-ness had a meaning anchored in the future, but it supplied tangible effects to Mrs. Lee's daily life in São Paulo. Brazil would never be deemed a place she could enjoy life: she spent most of her days working in the restaurant and the flower shop, and lived upstairs from the restaurant in very modest conditions. Similar to Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee would work until 1:00 or 2:00 at night after the employees had already left. By the time I worked in the restaurant, her mother was visiting her for some months, indicating that Mrs. Lee would not leave for South Korea very soon.

The Korean-ness lived in São Paulo by Mrs. Lee gave her a sense of integrity which allowed her to judge (and select) people around her, but at the same time it safeguarded her from everything that would be considered non-Korean; in this manner she protected her Korean-ness from the inconstancies and dangers of life. In this Korean-ness, Mrs. Lee had an assured place in the unspoken gender division in Mr. Kwon's businesses. Both of them were able to cook or arrange flowers, but everything would always require Mr. Kwon's approval. In the restaurant, Mr. Kwon and Alfonso would be hosting the customers and taking orders. It was clear that only men were supposed to be the public face of the restaurant and serve the customers' tables. Women usually worked inside the kitchen, hidden from the customers' eyes. Only when male employees did not show up for the night shift did female employees work at the customers' area.

In the Korean-ness evoked by Mrs. Lee, life had a tangible order in body features, food and gender relations. In her belief in this order of the world, everything considered absurd or contradictory - including everything that did not work or was unsuccessful - would be credited to the effects of non-Korean-ness. For this reason, there was nothing worthy outside this Korean-ness, only a possible mediation, a shielding of the risk and wickedness emanating from non-Korean-ness.

⁹³ Portuguese: I will return Korea.

3.3 WITH KITTY

Kitty texted me:

Image: large female eye with a tear drop on the corner

Kitty
Status: Oh, dolor que apuñala mi corazón⁹⁴

11 February 2014⁹⁵

Me salió positivo

Que quieres hacer ahora?

Y ahora voi ablar bien com jimmy pa saber q aser

Después llamame

Bueno cualquier cosa te aviso

The pregnancy test was positive. It took two days for Jimmy to meet Kitty and tell her that he did not know what to do. She messaged me that she would forget Jimmy and decide for herself, as Jimmy had reinforced that he had another girlfriend. For a while, Kitty did not reply to any of my messages. All of a sudden, I noticed that she had altered her app status:

Image: Our Lady of Caacupé in close-up

Kitty
Status:

21 February 2014

⁹⁴ Spanish: Oh, pain that stabs my heart.

⁹⁵ Spanish:

Kitty – It is positive

Simone – What do you want to do now?

Kitty – Now i'm going to have a serious conversation with jimmy to know what to do

Simone – After then, call me

Kitty – Well, i'll let you know

I imagined:

Kitty was carrying Jimmy's child in her womb. She had high hopes of bringing him into her life. Sat on her bed, she pressed his number on the mobile pad. It rang once, twice, three times. It rang the fourth time and she was withering inside. It rang the fifth time and ... oh, the bastard has answered! Kitty had a moment of ecstasy that lasted barely a second, because the voice on the other end of the line did not give her enough time to say *Hola*. It was a slap in the face, *Damn it, don't bother me, I'm with my girl!* And he hung up on her.

Kitty breathed once, twice, but could not feel that she was alive. Holding the phone, she pushed the camera button and watched herself through the display. She looked and looked over her face's moving image. The equipment drifted between her protruding belly and her thick legs. She saw herself ugly, chubby and alone. Still following the mobile's screen, she explored her feet, the bed and the floor. She noticed her crumbling nails, the rotten mattress and the humid and bare ground. She travelled to other corners of the room: the doorless red cupboard, the cracked cooker and the tiny space between her bed and the door. From the window, light overspilt its whiteness throughout the screen stinging her eyes. At the window's edge, she perceived the image of her Lady of Caacupé. It was the size of a beer can. She approached the patron saint figure, close-up framed it and hit the button. The photo was posted, but not a single line was written that day. Kitty only withdrew her hands onto her left breast, pressed the mobile against her chest and remained mute in a silent prayer.

At the very moment when everything appeared to be collapsing in Kitty's life, the posting of an image of Our Lady of Caacupé, patron saint of Paraguay, and the blank status gap left on her app profile expressed something about her experience. It was unclear what it meant exactly, but this episode allowed me to sense that Kitty was struggling to somehow understand her life in order to keep it going. As Kitty did not reveal to me what her post meant, I approached this instant through the poetics of resonance, incorporating it into my appreciation of Kitty's life. I did this not as a way to fill the gap, but as a magnifying procedure to highlight the presence of these fugitive instants in which, in fact, multiple aspects of somebody's life are at stake. Approaching this moment in this way and imagining Kitty in her distress was also a means to understanding her contradictory and incongruous disposition of insisting on being attached to someone that was not willing to stay in her life. However, in order to have a broader appreciation of this instant, it is necessary to engage with her life-journey, as I was able to follow it.

Bom Retiro, São Paulo, Brasil - 20 December 2013. All employees had gone to Paraguay, only Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee and I were rushing around in the kitchen because it was Friday night. While I was dishwashing, a young tall boy and a short blond girl rang the bell and Mrs. Lee immediately opened

the restaurant door saying, *Son los amigos de Wilson*⁹⁶. When they stepped in the kitchen, Mr. Kwon gave them aprons. The girl was directed to the worktop to slice scallions and the boy was given a tray to serve the customers' tables. I joined the girl in trimming the bean sprouts and asked her name, *Kitty*, and the boy, she added, *Es Jimmy*⁹⁷. The night was busy and I would meet them again only on 23 December 2013. When I arrived at 17:30 for the night shift, both Kitty and Jimmy had been working in the restaurant since 13:00. When I approached Kitty by the sink, she complained that she and Jimmy had been working from 13:00 to 23:00 over the weekend. She was exhausted and concerned that the wages were too low. She mentioned that she and Jimmy had been offered R\$ 850 (≈ £190) per month and asked me how much I was given. I confirmed to her that I was offered the same amount for my two work shifts per month. Prompted by her complaints of low wage, I enquired whether she had had a better salary in a previous job. Rinsing some bowls, she wiped the sweat from her forehead and commented, *Sí, en la passadera, hacíamos R\$ 1100*⁹⁸ (≈ £205). And I continued asking what she and Jimmy did in the 'passadera'⁹⁹. She smiled proudly, *Yo plancho y él pliega*¹⁰⁰. What happened that they were not working there anymore? She squeezed washing-up liquid on the worn out sponge and replied, *No hay pedidos en las oficinas por la Navidad*¹⁰¹. I joined her in dishwashing, rinsing the cutlery she lathered. Kitty revealed, then, that she and Jimmy had been living together for a while; she was 26 years old and he, 21. She had been living in São Paulo for four years. Jimmy had lived in the city before but had only recently returned. When we finished the dishwashing, she showed me a picture of her 10 year-old son on her mobile phone. Her child was in Paraguay with her mother.

Kitty and I became close workmates during my night shifts in Mr. Kwon's restaurant around Christmas time. We worked well together, completing the tasks Mrs. Lee ordered us to do and organising ourselves together in dishwashing, cutting vegetables, and cleaning the floor. Kitty was the only employee in the restaurant with whom I was able to keep in contact after I left the job, affording me other experiences with her besides work.

Kitty's life in São Paulo was susceptible to many uncertainties in the informal spaces of work in which she moved. Her jobs at passaderas or at Mr. Kwon's restaurant were examples of this mobility based on informal modes of work. As will be shown, Kitty's relationships tended to be erratic. The device that linked Kitty to the fluctuating network she lived through was her mobile phone. Therefore, after leaving my job in Mr. Kwon's restaurant, the main means of communication between us was mobile phone. When I could not find her at the restaurant on 10 January 2014, I phoned and she suggested that we chat via WhatsApp, a cheaper way to be in contact as we would be able to message for free with an internet connection. My relationship with Kitty was mostly based on an exchange of WhatsApp messages and intermittent meetings throughout 2014.

12 January 2014. After messaging Kitty the day before, we were having beer at the 'Copa'. It was Saturday night and the corner bar was abuzz with gales of alcoholic laughter from blue-collar men

⁹⁶ Spanish: They are Wilson's friends.

⁹⁷ Spanish: It's Jimmy.

⁹⁸ Spanish: Yes, at the 'passadera', we earned R\$ 1100.

⁹⁹ 'Passadera' is often an outsourced small business linked to the clothing industry in Bom Retiro.

¹⁰⁰ Spanish: I iron (the clothes) and he folds (them).

¹⁰¹ Spanish: There's no orders for the 'oficinas' around Christmas.

who had been enjoying the happy hour. I offered my glass of cachaça¹⁰² to Kitty, but she ordered a bottle of beer instead and commented, *En Paraguay, la gente toma aguardiente Tres Leones*¹⁰³. She had just left her work shift at the restaurant around 22:30. After sipping her glass of beer, she asked me, *Cómo fue tu víspera de año nuevo*¹⁰⁴? Family, partner, greetings at midnight, nothing special, I said. *Cómo fue la tuya?*¹⁰⁵, I enquired. She gulped down the beer and exhaled, *Jimmy me encerró en mi habitación cuando era para celebrar la noche con una amiga. Él dijo que iba a reunirse con sus primos ... Él vino, tomó las llaves y me dejó sola. Grité toda la noche, traté de llamar a algunos amigos, pero la gente ya se había ido a la fiesta. Tiré todas las cosas de Jimmy's por la ventana. El bastardo regresó alrededor de las 5 ...*¹⁰⁶

Shocked by this story, I could not prevent myself from saying that, if Kitty felt compelled to, she could report Jimmy to the Women's Special Police Office. I would help her to do so. Kitty placed her glass on the table and seeing that I took her too seriously, declared, *No, año nuevo, vida nueva!*¹⁰⁷, adding that Jimmy was not living with her anymore, staying with his cousins in Brás.

In the following weeks, we continued to have brief chats. Kitty had a day off on the 25 January 2014 and was keen to hang out with me. That day was a holiday and I suggested a public concert on a square near Bom Retiro, but we did not meet up. Days later, I noticed that Kitty had changed her phone profile photo and status:

¹⁰² Liquour distilled from sugarcane in Brazil.

¹⁰³ Spanish: In Paraguay people are used to aguardiente. Aguardiente: liquour distilled from sugarcane in Paraguay and other Latin American countries.

¹⁰⁴ Spanish: How was your New Year's Eve?

¹⁰⁵ Spanish: How was yours?

¹⁰⁶ Spanish: Jimmy locked me in my room when I was to celebrate the night with a female friend. He said he would join his cousins... He came, took the keys and left me all alone. I shouted all night long, I tried to phone some friends, but everybody had already gone to party. I threw all Jimmy's stuff out the window. The bastard came back around 5am...

¹⁰⁷ Spanish: No, new year, new life!

Image: large female eye with a tear drop on the corner | Kitty

Status: Oh, dolor que apuñala mi corazón¹⁰⁸

10 February 2014¹⁰⁹

La verdade simone a vos te cuento confio em sty embarazada y nose q aser

Hola, estas triste? Necesitas ayuda?

Bueno sta bien gracias x tú amistad simone vos sos la segunda persona q sabes después d jimmy sty desesperada

Vamos a encontrarnos

The next day, I met Kitty near Mr. Kwon's restaurant. On our way to find a place to sit and have a conversation, I asked her whether or not she had taken a pregnancy test. She had not taken a test, but was sure she was pregnant: she was dizzy, kind of sick and her menstrual period had not come. She reckoned that she had probably become pregnant the month before. I insisted she should take a test and we stopped at a local drugstore. Embarrassed, she confided, *Simone, no tengo plata*¹¹⁰. I assured her that she should not be concerned as it was on me. Then, we headed to a public recreational centre nearby. She mentioned she had never been there before. When we sat in one of the common tables indoors, I asked her what she would like to do. She did not know what to do, as presented in Chapter 1.

Kitty was not comfortable that we were only talking about her. She pressed about how I was getting along with my partner. I acknowledged her request with embarrassment: surely, I was just another girl who (like her) had problems as well. I told her that, besides my partner having to work excessively and travel a lot on business lately, he phoned me all the time and helped me as much as he could. Then, she asked about my family. I shared that my mom had been suffering from back pain and she might have to undergo surgery. Kitty took her mobile phone from her pocket and showed me

¹⁰⁸ Spanish: Oh, pain that stabs my heart.

¹⁰⁹ Spanish:

Simone – Hi, are you sad? Do you need help?

Kitty – The truth simone I tell you I trust you i'm pregnant and don't know whatto do

Simone – Let's meet up

Kitty – Well alright thanks a lot for your friendship simone you're the second one 2 know after jimmy i'm desperate

¹¹⁰ Spanish: Simone, I don't have money.

a picture of her mom. I complimented Kitty for having such a young and beautiful mother, a woman in her forties with long and curly black hair. Next, she pushed a button and displayed the photo of her ten year old son again.

As featured at the start of this section, Kitty texted me that her pregnancy test was positive and that she would go looking for Jimmy again. For some time, she did not reply to my messages, until I noticed that she left her status unfilled and posted a close-up image of Our Lady of Caacupé. Because Kitty did not reveal to me what was happening to her at that very moment, I resorted to the poetics of resonance to make sense of it. This was the very point at which I imagined Kitty, knowing she was a few weeks pregnant, becoming aware that the man who was responsible for her situation was not going to support her. She had to make the difficult decision between having a child without a father in a country different from Paraguay or risking her life in an illegal abortion - since abortion is usually considered a criminal offence in Brazil.

Being alone in São Paulo, the pregnancy would more than likely disrupt Kitty's prior plans of working in Brazil and sending remittances to her ten-year-old son and mother in Paraguay. For some reason, going back to Paraguay and to mother's house was not considered an option for her. At the same time, Kitty did not have official documents to stay in Brazil and she worked informally in a restaurant owned by people from South Korea. The pregnancy would simply reinforce the precarious conditions of Kitty's life in São Paulo.

Enduring such a critical moment in her life, Kitty would appeal to the divine grace of a power beyond human understanding, the compassion of Our Lady of Caacupé. Renewing this connection through the mediation of a mobile phone application, she somewhat made public, for those who had her contact number, something about her state at that moment.

On 26 February 2014, I finally received a message from Kitty: *Hola simone qtal sabes donde queda un hospital pa aser los exámenes tratamiento para tener mi bb*¹¹¹. Kitty had decided to have the baby! However, it would take almost another month for us to go to a public health unit as she had handed in her documents from Paraguay to a Paraguayan lawyer with whom she was acquainted in order to apply for temporary residency in Brazil. I had recommended that she go to a non-governmental organisation specialising in supporting migrants in São Paulo free of charge, but she disregarded my advice.

Meanwhile, on 25 March 2014, she sent a message updating me that Mr. Kwon and Mrs. Lee had dismissed her from the restaurant after becoming aware of her pregnancy—also complaining that it was not possible to guess it simply by looking at her 'belly'. More than likely, someone in Mrs. Lee's compromisso network had snitched on her.

On 27 March 2014, Kitty popped up again in a message, *Hola mi niña cuando tienes tiempo pa ir conmigo al médico, ahora yo no sty trabajando*¹¹². I asked her if she had got her documents from Paraguay, and she confirmed, *Sí ya tengo ya*¹¹³.

¹¹¹ Spanish: Hi simone how are you do you know any hospital where I can take the medical tests to have my baby?

¹¹² Spanish: Hi my dear when do you have time to go to the doctor with me, now i'm not working.

¹¹³ Spanish: Yes I have them already.

On 31 March 2014 morning, Kitty and I walked to Bom Retiro's health unit at the end of José Paulino Street. She carried a plastic bag with all her documents and mobile phone. At the health unit, Kitty was number 798 in the queue to the reception desk. When her number was called after about twenty minutes of waiting, she hesitated to speak in Spanish and impelled me to speak in Portuguese for her. I told the desk assistant that Kitty was pregnant, she was from Paraguay and required medical assistance. The assistant, a slender blonde woman, was very nice and asked for documents. Kitty presented her ID from Paraguay, but the assistant noted that Kitty already possessed the yellow Brazilian health system card and asked for that as well. The assistant told us that, although she knew she was already pregnant, Kitty should take a pregnancy test. After, she would be visited at home during the following days by a health unit community agent in order to be registered and included in Bom Retiro's health unit care. We waited around fifteen minutes for the pregnancy test before a nurse yelled Kitty's name. We entered the room in which the nurse was working. She asked Kitty the date when she had her last menstrual period and handed over a disposable coffee cup that should be filled with urine for the test. Kitty went to the toilet and delivered the tiny cup back. The nurse immersed a tiny strip in the urine, commenting, *Ih, precisa tomar mais água*¹¹⁴. The strip must have signalled positive for pregnancy, as the nurse told us to wait for the doctor next. We waited for another fifteen minutes and Kitty commented she did not drink much water because she preferred soft drinks such as Coca Cola. Her name was called loudly again. The doctor, a tall man with a brown beard, said she would be included in the health unit care program when a community agent would visit her at the address she provided, repeating the information the reception clerk had already given. He prescribed folic acid pills to support her pregnancy. I asked if he knew what time the community agent would come for her, since she usually worked during the day. He asked if she did not live where she worked¹¹⁵, and we confirmed that she worked in a different place from her residential address. The doctor said he would ask the community agent to phone Kitty before meeting her. When he gave us the prescription, we went to the health unit pharmacy.

Outside the health unit, I proposed we visit a cyber café nearby where many job ads for Spanish-speaking people living in the neighbourhood were displayed in the window. Kitty instantly reported that she was working at Mr. Kwon's restaurant again and did not need another job for the moment. She had asked the Paraguayan lawyer to talk to Mr. Kwon and Mrs. Lee and they immediately hired her back, as they did not wish to face another prosecution. I was amazed by Kitty's cunning way of reversing her vulnerable position in the restaurant's informal labour environment by playing exactly with the precarious elements of the employers' business. She mentioned that Mrs. Lee was even indulging her with food, justifying it as being important for the baby.

On our way to her home, we stopped at the local supermarket to get supplies for Kitty and I helped her to carry the items, asking if she had news from Jimmy. She told me that he continued to refuse to help her. However, she was seeing him again—in the end—every time that he decided to

¹¹⁴ Eeeh, you need to drink more water.

¹¹⁵ Because many Spanish-speaking migrants who work in the mentioned sewing units, 'oficinas', usually work and live at the same place, it was probably assumed that Kitty had a similar routine.

stay in her room. For example, one Saturday he had hung out with friends and very drunkenly phoned her around 5:00 a.m. and asked to sleep in her room and 'check if the baby was ok'.

Arriving at her building, she pushed the metal door of a very long corridor and invited me to go in with her. We walked at the long corridor that ended in rough concrete stairs and we went to the first floor. To the left, there were brick walls; to the right, another corridor had been created from sheets of plywood. We turned down the right corridor where each door led to a small private room. The door of one of the rooms had been left ajar and, thus, the vision of a tidy double bed was revealed. Kitty's room was at the end of the hall; she unlocked the door's padlock. As we went in, I noticed that she had a new mattress; she explained the previous one had been infested with bugs and she had had to throw it away. I helped her to store the groceries and left her, as she had to get ready to work in the restaurant.

On 7 April 2014 I sent a message to Kitty to check whether or not the health unit community agent had visited her at her room. She replied very late in the night that the agent had been to her home on 4 April, filled out a form and provided her with more tests to be done to initiate the medical pregnancy monitoring. I offered to accompany Kitty if she wanted, but I got no response.

I wrote several messages to Kitty during April. As she did not reply to any of them, I inferred that she was confident of taking care of herself. On 29 April 2014, I phoned her, but the mobile service informed me that she was out of reach. She sent a message that day explaining she had lost my contact number; yet I did not receive further information on how she was.

On 26 May 2014, I phoned her again and was not successful in talking to her. I decided to send her a message and realized that her profile had been changed again. She posted the image of a long-haired white kitten with red lace on the top of its head and the status message: *Intentar no es perder... si perdes no sera el fin*¹¹⁶. This statement perhaps indicated that she was feeling more positive about her life. When I sent, *que tal?*¹¹⁷, another message came back few minutes later enquiring, *Quien sos?*¹¹⁸. I wrote, *És Simone*, but there was no further communication.

Only on 16 June 2014, Kitty contacted me again messaging that she was not working at Mr. Kwon's restaurant any more. She was already six months' pregnant and had decided to have the baby in Brazil. Because I was away from São Paulo, I was not able to meet her. On 31 July 2014 I finally phoned Kitty and, to my surprise, she answered and greeted me. I was to visit her the following day. I imagined she would be facing difficulties, since she was not longer working at Mr. Kwon's restaurant. So, before going to her place, I searched for public programs that could provide her with support. The next day, I found Kitty drying her hair with a towel at her room's door. Her belly had grown as she was already in the eighth month of pregnancy. She was cooking chicken in her room and stirring a casserole. She invited me to sit, re-arranging the contents of the desk beside the cooker. There were black bugle beads, flat sequins and black blouses spread all over the desk. She said she was not working at the moment, but was embroidering women's tops for a low per piece rate. I asked if she had been seeing Jimmy; she said he had disappeared from her life. She poured some water on the chicken and

¹¹⁶ Spanish: If you try, you do not lose... if you lose, it is not the end.

¹¹⁷ Spanish: Kitty, how are you?

¹¹⁸ Spanish: Who are you?

smiled, *Ahora tengo un nuevo marido, Juan.*¹¹⁹ Still stirring contents of the pan, she added, *Ya no puedo vivir sola de nuevo.*¹²⁰ Juan worked during the day, but he would be back for lunch (so, she was cooking for Juan!). I asked her if he was from Paraguay and she confirmed that he was. Was he treating her well? She boasted he was 24 years old and had more brains than Jimmy. We laughed together. She said Juan was a hard worker, but they were having problems with past job experiences. Both of them had worked for two months in an ‘oficina’ owned by a Paraguayan fellow. She operated as ‘dobradora’¹²¹, whereas Juan was ‘planchador’¹²², ironing clothes. However, the owner fled to Paraguay and had not paid any of the employees. They were claiming remuneration from the Brazilian responsible for the order, but the lady said she had nothing to do with the Paraguayan job negotiations. At that moment, Juan was working as ‘planchador’ in another ‘pasadera’¹²³, being paid R\$ 800 (≈£140) per month. Kitty believed she was not able to find work now her pregnancy was obvious. She was concerned that they could not earn enough money for both of them, mentioning that they should have paid the room’s rent two weeks ago. I asked if her mother knew she was pregnant. She said that she had not talked to mother for ages. I believed this meant that her mother did not know about her future grandchild. I remarked that I had talked to a social worker earlier and Kitty could have support to have the baby, and maybe even make Jimmy legally responsible for the child if she wanted. Kitty replied that she only wanted to know the baby’s sex—and she had to leave after lunch to have an anatomy scan. As Juan would be coming home for lunch, I decided to leave. Kitty invited me to stay for lunch with them, but I preferred not to. Later that afternoon, I was walking on Prates Street and met her again. She was returning home from the ultrasound scan. I smiled and asked about the results. She replied, *Es un varoncito.*¹²⁴ I congratulated Kitty, embracing her with joy.

Many weeks later, Kitty was not answering my messages or calls and it was nearing time for the birth, so I went to see her at her place. On 28 August 2014, I rang the bell of her building. After a guy on the first floor informed her that I was downstairs, she came to the door. I excused myself and explained that I had been concerned because I could not contact her on her mobile phone. She said her mobile had been stolen and, thus, none of my messages reached her. Furthermore, she stated that she had gone to a hospital in the north zone around 4:00 that day, as she had felt pain in her abdomen. Doctors examined her and said she could return home. The baby would probably be born in two weeks’ time. She invited me to come upstairs to meet her ‘new husband’, Juan. She walked slowly now. In Kitty’s room, I found Juan, a short-haired young man, lying on the mattress covered in layers of blankets as the afternoon was freezing. They were watching TV. I gave him my mobile number and I asked for his number. I reinforced the fact that they could call me at any time.

Kitty gave birth on 2 October 2014 in a public hospital in the eastern zone of São Paulo. She brought her baby into the world by caesarean section. The baby had to stay in hospital for 10 days. She wrote me a message when she was leaving the hospital without her child. Unfortunately, I was

¹¹⁹ Spanish: Now I have a new husband, Juan.

¹²⁰ Spanish: I cannot live by myself again.

¹²¹ Employee responsible for folding clothes, after they are ironed, in the garment industry.

¹²² Employee responsible for ironing clothes in the garment industry.

¹²³ The small business linked to the clothing industry in Bom Retiro specialised in ironing and folding clothes.

¹²⁴ Spanish: It’s a little boy.

extremely ill myself and could not visit or help her at that time. The baby was brought home on 13 October 2014. Kitty was still recovering from surgery and Juan was desperately trying to get a job. On 30 October 2014, Juan called to say that the pair were leaving for Paraguay the next day. He suggested that I visit in order to see the baby before they left. They were going to Juan's home town to stay with his family. My own doctor advised against me leaving my bed as I was still too weak, so Kitty sent me photos of her son: a little boy in a nappy and a white sleeveless t-shirt. He looked calm and well. I was disappointed that I could not help Kitty at this critical moment for her and Juan. Since then, I have not had any further news from them.

I have organized Kitty's life-journey in the chronological order with which I followed the events of her life because this is the way I realised the sense of Paraguayan-ness that she resorted to at many moments in São Paulo. Kitty never spoke a word about Paraguayan-ness or any other nationality with me. Yet, it was by way of Paraguayan-ness that she would have recourse to pursue a trajectory in the city. Paraguayan-ness was the network in which she was enmeshed and in which she could find work at Mr.Kwon's restaurant or at 'pasaderas' or 'oficinas'. It was also the reference point from which to consider partners, such as Jimmy or Juan. Paraguayan-ness could disappoint her, as Jimmy's Paraguayan-ness did not take responsibility for his child or the Paraguayan 'oficina' owner who did not pay her for two months' work. But Paraguayan-ness could equally provide her solutions, when the Paraguayan lawyer was able to win back her post in Mr. Kwon's restaurant, or Juan's Paraguayan-ness was willing to embrace her and her child to become a family. At the most critical moment of her life in São Paulo, Paraguay was again the place to go.

All my attempts to 'help' her by offering access to official organisations such as the Women's Special Police Office, the non-governmental organization that support international migrants in São Paulo, or the city council program for the protection of pregnant women were trivial before the resourcefulness she was able to conjure up in the Paraguayan-ness she was immersed in. None the less, many of the difficulties she faced were related in a way to this same Paraguayan-ness. In contradictory ways, Kitty lived through this sense of Paraguayan-ness in São Paulo, remarkably reinventing her life in it.

I wonder how this Paraguayan-ness lived by Kitty in São Paulo—that brought her a new partner and a new baby—would encounter the Paraguayan-ness embodied by her mother and her ten year-old son in her hometown. But this I leave to the reader to imagine, if desired.

In these journeys of being, the senses of ethnic belonging elicited were singularly lived by Mr. Kwon, by Mrs. Lee and by Kitty. Whereas Mr. Kwon and Mrs. Lee shared a Korean-ness strongly directed by a longing for a future temporality, Kitty resorted to Paraguayan-ness as a trustworthy network to keep carrying on her precarious present in the city of São Paulo. The future-aspiring Korean-ness of Mr. Kwon and Mrs. Lee asserted extreme contrasts concerning other nationalities, while Kitty's Paraguayan-ness was not stressed through contrasts but by not regarding any other nationality as reference to direct her life.

Mr. Kwon and Mrs. Lee persistently pursued being Korean, whilst Kitty quietly subscribed being Paraguayan. National identification revealed itself as a means to allocating distinctiveness in their relationships with others and the world in the context of the city of São Paulo (Gellner 1984). It would be possible to accommodate these senses of belonging into consolidated models of ethnic interactions in which these national affiliations would fit a relational and situational scheme of categorization (Evan-Pritchard 1940, Mitchell 1956, Barth 1969): Korean-ness becomes substantiated inasmuch as there are Paraguayan-ness, Japanese-ness and/or Brazilian-ness to be discerned as such. In this way, each ethnic position would express significance once counterbalanced by another one through alterity, establishing discernible boundaries between one another.

However, because these general models are conventionally thought of as coherent systems of belonging, there is no room for personal variations within them and, furthermore, there is no margin for the disjointedness that these variations can expose. As Eriksen reinforces in assessing the productiveness of the notion of ethnicity contemporarily, 'boundaries are maintained, *despite* [emphasis added] a flow of people across them' (2010:47). In this view, people's particular input is deemed as 'anomaly' in a simple system, or as 'entrepreneurship' in a multi-varied system in which a person is the 'broker' of the many affiliations she or he can swap between according to a given situation (Eriksen:2010). Consequently, ethnic systems of affiliation are meant to work independently, regardless of the individuals involved, who are assumed to be rational enough to manage positions within a given set of possible attachments.

However, the life-journeys of Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee and Kitty explicitly contest this sweeping rationality: a model that disregards any noteworthiness of personal experiences in understanding human phenomena. It is in the minutiae of someone's ordinary struggle that ethnicity can show its validity as a reference that tangibly affects the world. In the cases of Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee and Kitty, *each of them lived the sense of belonging to a specific nationality in very particular ways*. Kitty manifested her belonging to a certain Paraguayan-ness when she turned to other Paraguayans to find a job, to regularize her permanency in Brazil, or to have love affairs. Paraguayan-ness was this resourceful reservoir to which she was able to resort in the most critical moments of her stay in the

city of Sao Paulo. Differently, Mr. Kwon and Mrs. Lee insistently employed Korean-ness as a way of creating order in a perceived complicated world. In classifying people through nationalities that were positioned within a range of moral appreciation, they asserted the expression of their Korean-ness as leading reference to judge everything else. Although they shared this principle of categorization, enabling them to consider themselves as members of the same 'kind', in regard to living, working and speaking together as peers, each of them developed a very particular way to deal with non-Korean-ness. As depicted, Mr. Kwon was inclined to assign Korean-ness to aspects of behaviour of non-Koreans that he considered 'good', whereas Mrs. Lee mediated her relationship with non-Koreans by applying the notion of 'compromisso'. The appreciation of the particular value of personal renderings of ethnicity finds convergence with the idea of 'personal nationalism' (Cohen 1996). Discussing the case of Scottish nationalism, Cohen emphasizes that 'the nation is one of the resources on which individuals draw to formulate a sense of selfhood' (1996:803). The phenomenon of nationalism is better evaluated when its personal nature can be recognised, i.e., the specific ways in which each individual expresses a sense of identification to a nation. Hence, Rapport (2012a) speaks of 'tensile nationalism' when describing the fluid and shifting character of 'Scottishness' found in the discursive practices of employees and administrators at a large health organization in central-eastern Scotland. The vagueness and contradictions involved in the various personal discourses show that this sort of national enunciation is not homogeneous, but situationally operated within an array of other different ways of being. One is 'Scottish', *in tension* with being a 'mother', a 'football supporter', and so on. In short, taking into account how each person construes a sense of belonging in her or his own terms, it is possible to appreciate how life is authored in such a way to reconstitute the complexities involved in it.

In conjunction with this, the life journeys of Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee and Kitty also evidenced the precarious character of their ethnic-cum-national enunciations. These enunciations were lived as they were always unstable and impermanent in such a way that they had to be continually restored because they were challenged by every event in the continuity of their life-courses in São Paulo. To this extent, Mr. Kwon and Mrs. Lee reinstated their Korean-ness every time they had to hire staff for their businesses or every time they had to open the restaurant's door, while Kitty recalled her Paraguayan-ness in distressing moments of unemployment and in her desire to be loved. These insistent re-statements of belonging only attested to their fleeting and unsteady significance. There was no clear and solid system and no boundaries to rely on absolutely. Hence, these same efforts to convey affiliation paradoxically also yielded contradictory and disappointing experiences: a Korean-ness that did not confer wealth or a sense of achievement before other considered Koreans in the

cases of Mr. Kwon and Mrs. Lee; or a Paraguayan-ness that brought pregnancy for Kitty but not shared parenthood.

As the poetics of resonance intended to make apparent, within a life-course, there are particulars that are not graspable to compose a coherent and intelligible explanation of someone's life; but they *are* part of a life-course and they *can* be lived as instances in which the person and the world are put in question or on hold. Because, in the life-journeys portrayed in this account, life was also trial and error. The trivial act of feeding a cat, the insistence of cooking every meal in the restaurant, or the worship of a patron saint were occurrences that did not clarify boundaries or meanings. These incidents, in fact, made boundaries or meanings more imprecise, but they did make at least Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee and Kitty more human.

The senses of Korean-ness and Paraguayan-ness conveyed here allow me to concur that ethnic-cum-national affiliation is 'an emic category of ascription' (Eriksen 2010: 16). However, as the life-journeys of Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee and Kitty persistently indicated, nationalities or ethnicities can offer a starting point to support the making of life-on-the-move, but they are not sufficient in themselves. Life overflows them.

CHAPTER 4

IN-BE(ING)TWEEN JOURNEYS

What are here called ‘in-be(ing)tween journeys’ are the life-journeys in which the sense of belonging to a specific nationality is still the anchor directing people’s life-course in São Paulo, but these journeys are also in dialogue with new involvements experienced through time in the city. Following the life-journeys of Julieta and Mr. Soh will demonstrate that their respective senses of Bolivian-ness and Korean-ness were undoubtedly central to their trajectories. However, their ongoing life-immersion in São Paulo also offered each a sense of Brazilian-ness that became a persistent counterpoint and disconcerting element in their senses of being Bolivian or Korean. Moreover, each of them manifested this pendulum-like concern in very particular ways.

Carajo!¹²⁵ This pain is killing me! I can't believe it. Ay, hijito¹²⁶, have pity on your mother, don't be afraid to come into the world, I'm just out here waiting for you. Ay, mamita¹²⁷, mi Virgen¹²⁸, stay with me, hold my son's hands and bring him guarded in your infinite love. Oh, mierda! Mierda!¹²⁹ My back, oh, my back! My child, everything is going to be alright, everything is going to be alright. Mom's here. Hold la Virgen's hand and come out. Ay, mamita, you better than anyone knows how awful labour pain is. Who did you curse when Jesus was being born? Only mothers are able to understand this moment. Not even god knows what it is. God did not have the balls to face it. If god were a woman... Mamita, what is this pain of giving birth to a child? You must have felt pain, you were human before being saint. Please, mamita, take care of my son and have mercy on me. I make my son holy under your grace. Aaahhhh! Hijo de puta!¹³⁰ No, no, hijito, it's not you. It's this fucking pain! Ay, mamita, you know I have already promised to visit you in Quilacollo, please, bring my son alive and well. Aaaay, puta madre¹³¹!

A child was being delivered and a mother was in pain. During labour, Julieta, kept yelling curse words in Spanish every time contractions hit her badly. In her swear words, I also located her strength to go through this highly uncertain moment that was giving birth to a child, a moment when control of her body was being completely taken away and all the risks involved in childbirth were at play. In taking her cursing as a starting point for my imagining, through a poetics of resonance, I became mindful of the many aspects of Julieta's life that were involved in her particular situation of giving birth to a child in São Paulo: her role as activist for migrant women's rights in Brazil; her apprehension of being away from family members in Bolivia; her faith in the powers of Our Lady of Urkupiña; and her future with her Brazilian husband and daughter in São Paulo. These elements converged in such a way as to give Julieta a blend of conflicting emotions of rage, exasperation and contentment during the birth of her second child. In going through her life-journey, as it was shared with me, the interconnectedness of all these part can be better recognised.

30 November 2013, Bela Vista, São Paulo, Brazil. Pregnant activism. The auditorium was crammed. Around 250 seats were taken and people were standing up on both edges of the room. The opening session for the 1st Municipal Conference on Public Policies for Immigrants was to begin. The members of the opening panel were being invited in Portuguese to move to the stage: the representative from

¹²⁵ Spanish: Fuck!

¹²⁶ Spanish: Little child.

¹²⁷ Spanish: Mommy.

¹²⁸ Spanish: My holy lady.

¹²⁹ Spanish: Oh, shit! Shit!

¹³⁰ Spanish: Son of a bitch.

¹³¹ Spanish: Fucking mother.

the Italian Association in São Paulo, an official from the City Hall Department of Human Rights and Citizenship, and Julieta Mena, member of the Migrant Women's Base Group. Julieta was not present and anyone willing to represent the Latin American migrants on the panel was invited to step in. Identifying himself as Bolivian, a young man in the front row volunteered. The panel was supposed to coordinate a discussion on the internal rules of the event and would be chaired by another member of the City Hall Department of Human Rights and Citizenship.

The panel Chair began by recalling in Portuguese the process that led to that day and what was expected to follow after the conference. Previous meetings called 'Spontaneous phases' and 'Mobilizing phases' had already gathered people and instigated topics of interest. The 'Mobilizing phases' in November had generated proposals to feed into public policies for immigrants. The aim for that municipal conference was: to tailor proposals from the local level in order to present them at the national conference to be held later, and choose the delegates to represent the immigrants living in São Paulo.

It had been almost a year since the Workers' Party-affiliated candidate had been elected mayor of the city of São Paulo. The 'participatory governance' announced in his political programme was already reaching the organised migrants' groups in the city through these meetings, pushing forward the possibility of leading a national debate on international migration.

The other members of the opening panel proceeded by reading parts of the event rules in Portuguese. A group from South Africa complained in English that they were unable to understand the discussion as no English version of the rules was circulated. An English transcript was provided, together with two translators.

Unexpectedly, I spotted Julieta standing up near the stage on the right side of the auditorium. Many participants offered their seats, as she was five months' pregnant, but she politely refused. I believe she was trying to make herself visible to the panel on the stage, but she was not called to join. I was sitting at the back, far from her but close to the sound and light control room. The session continued.

In respect to one of the items in the rules, a representative from a Bolivian association questioned in Portuguese the delegation group's composition, claiming that it should follow the proportion of the different nationalities living in the city. He was concerned that the Latin American community – according to him, the largest of the immigrant communities – would be misrepresented in the delegation. A grey haired lady suggested in Portuguese that the city of São Paulo should demand a larger number of delegates for the national conference since it concentrated the largest number of international migrants in the country. The representative from the Arab community, in Portuguese, backed both interventions, adding that the Arab community was one of the oldest and the largest immigrant groups in the city.

The panel members deliberated that the conference rules were purposely tailored so as not to define the different nationalities as such and thus did not approve a criterion of proportionality by nationality. Concerning the number of delegates, the panel chair explained that São Paulo was already the city with the largest number of delegates in the national conference so all participants should be

attentive not to overshadow other cities in the country. For this reason, the claim for enlarging the number of delegates representing the immigrants from São Paulo was not accepted either.

An old lady, in Portuguese, raised the question of illegal migrants living in the city, claiming that migrants in illegal situations experienced different problems and these situations should be identified and paid proper attention. The panel chair immediately stated, *Nenhuma pessoa é ilegal*¹³², echoing a catchy worldly slogan created by social movement campaigns. He was promptly applauded by the audience. He, then, cried, *Não há ilegais, há seres humanos*.¹³³ And he was acclaimed again. Future political careers were brewing...

After discussing the internal rules, one of the organisers announced in Portuguese that the mayor had already signed the decree to allow immigrants to be part of the municipal councils in the districts with an immigrant population of over 0.5% residents. The elections concerning immigrant representatives for the participatory municipal councils would be held on 30 March 2014. The announcement was applauded and the participants were directed to take part in discussion groups on one of the following themes:

- Promoting and ensuring access to social rights and public services;
- Decent work;
- Social inclusion and cultural recognition;
- Federal legislation and national migration policy;

As the crowd dispersed, I was able to reach Julieta and finally greet her. She was holding her hands over her pregnant belly, a bit distressed at having arrived late and not being able to play her part in the drama of the migrant movements' politics in São Paulo.

I had met Julieta years before, during the activities of a cultural heritage project that identified immigrants' cultural references in the district of Bom Retiro. I had been in the waiting room of one of the major non-governmental organisations for the support of international migrants in São Paulo when Julieta approached me. She was also waiting to speak to one of the organisation's coordinators; she had just arrived in São Paulo from Bolivia and was willing to contribute in any way possible. She mentioned that she was a food science engineer in her thirties and that she was not finding compatible jobs in São Paulo. I had commented that perhaps love was the reason that had brought her to São Paulo. She had smiled and confirmed that she had recently got married to a Brazilian citizen.

Julieta became interested in the cultural heritage project and after this first encounter, she attended many of the project's public meetings. During these meetings, she would introduce herself as someone affiliated with the Humanist Movement. For her, the project in Bom Retiro converged with many of the Humanist Movement's principles, such as respect for cultural diversity and encouragement for non-violent and non-discriminatory actions. She was already involved in the Humanist Movement in Bolivia and, in fact, had met her Brazilian husband attending one of its international seminars.

¹³² Portuguese: No person is illegal.

¹³³ Portuguese: There are no illegal people, there are human beings.

In São Paulo, her activist trajectory shifted over the years from a general support for convergent campaigns or projects to a specific political position within the migrants' social movement arena. She finally found the specific political claims she would work for by going through the very personal experience of becoming pregnant and giving birth to her first child in Brazil. Wanting a natural childbirth in a country where caesarean birth rates were extremely high, Julieta perceived this as one of the real issues migrant women in Brazil had to endure. In deciding to advocate on behalf of migrant women's health and citizenship, not only did she find a unique place to raise specific demands for migrants but she also was able to question public health policies in São Paulo more broadly. Concurrently, the gendered framework she introduced into the migrants' social movement debates enabled the emergence of a critique of male dominance in migrant households and the disclosing of cases of domestic violence, turning quotidian and intimate affairs into politics. To a great extent, Julieta's sense of Bolivian-ness in São Paulo was tightly bound to this public performance in the social movements' domain.

After the cultural heritage project in Bom Retiro, Julieta and I became closer and strengthened our bonds of friendship. When I returned to Brazil to begin my fieldwork research, she was already an established personality in the social movements' forum in São Paulo and was gathering supporters and volunteers for the migrant women's claims she had been advocating. Together with young women from Bolivia, Chile and Peru, and with Brazilian early-career midwives, Julieta collaborated in activities for the Migrant Women's Base Group.

On 7 December 2013, the Base Group organised a meeting at Kantuta Open Market, one of the well-known Sunday meeting places for Latin America-born migrants, particularly those from Bolivia, Peru and Paraguay. The activity aimed to disseminate leaflets concerning the rights for migrant pregnant women to have access to public health services in the city and to find pregnant women interested in discussing their cases.

About 14:00, a group of young women gathered at the centre of the Kantuta Open Market, around the concrete park benches in the middle of the square: a Brazilian journalist, a lawyer born in Bolivia but raised in Brazil, a Brazilian midwife, a Brazilian midwife student, and Julieta. I followed Julieta and the lawyer around the open market. They gave leaflets to girls and women passing by or sat around the small park, trying to raise awareness about the Base Group's activities. People did not pay much attention and the group's effort seemed ineffective. Finally, a pregnant lady accompanied by her husband and baby son showed interest in participating in the Base Group's discussion. We all walked to the Scalabrin Centre for Migrants a few blocks away, where the conversation was to take place. The invited couple were from Bolivia, but their son had been born in Brazil. The husband pushed the baby's stroller around the streets, while an assemblage of women surrounded him. A room was provided for the meeting at the Scalabrin Centre. The women sat around the pregnant lady on the couches and chairs and her husband was directed to stay with his son on the cushions on the floor of the room. The pregnant lady sat holding her hands tightly, visibly apprehensive. Her husband remained awkwardly in silence in the corner of the room. Julieta began by asking the lady's name, which was whispered shyly. Julieta then introduced the Base Group's purposes, stressing, *Yo también*

*soy de Bolivia y estoy embarazada*¹³⁴. She continued by saying that she knew how difficult it was for Bolivian mothers to gain access to the Brazilian health system, though every migrant woman had the right to health care. The pregnant lady remained silent. The professional midwife enquired how many months pregnant the lady was. Finally, the pregnant lady reacted, *Seis meses*.¹³⁵ The midwife questioned further whether the lady was having ante-natal care in a health unit. The pregnant lady said, *No me dio atención, porque no tenía comprovante de residência con mi nombre*.¹³⁶ The midwife asked which health unit she had tried to register in. *Elisa Maria*, said the lady. The lawyer stated that no health unit in the Brazilian public service was allowed to deny access because a patient lacked documents. Oral information was enough for registration. It was agreed that during the week Julieta would phone the health unit manager in Elisa Maria and the professional midwife would try to check another unit close to Elisa Maria. Julieta gave her own phone contacts to the pregnant lady, as the lady declared she did not have a phone contact of her own. When the family left the room, the meeting discussed the Brazilian health system structure that forced women into caesarean birth, and the infliction of medical violence on women's bodies.

Along with this sort of activity, the Base Group was intensely involved in participating in meetings convened by non-governmental or public service organisations within the migrants' forum. The group also joined in parades and demonstrations such as on the Migrants' National Day or the International Women's Day.

Besides her activism in migrant women's issues, Julieta also worked with her husband, Mario, in the small business he managed producing customised equipment for retail stores. Julieta administered the business webpage and the online orders from all over the country. Working remotely from home, she was responsible as well for the household and her daughter's care. The family previously lived in an apartment in the city centre, but later they moved to a larger house next to the Humanist Movement Centre in Cotia, a municipality close to São Paulo.

The majority of Julieta's close friends in São Paulo were members of the Humanist Movement. Her daughter's godparents, for example, were part of the Humanist Movement too. I was truly surprised when she invited me to be the godmother of her baby son! I warned her that I did not possess a particular talent for raising kids. She said, *Confío en ti, és mi primer amiga fuera del movimiento, vos sabrás*.¹³⁷ Her son's godfather would be a cousin living in Bolivia.

As a devoted godmother, I was able to accompany her and Mario during their preparation to gain access to natural birth-monitoring in one of the very few public units well-equipped to execute natural birth in the city. Her first daughter's birth had been performed at home, with the support of her midwife friend from the Humanist Movement— now her daughter's godmother. However, for her second child, Julieta was keen to make use of the public health system in São Paulo, as she advocated for it in her political claims.

¹³⁴ Spanish: I am Bolivian too and I am pregnant.

¹³⁵ Spanish: Six months.

¹³⁶ Portuguese: I was denied medical care, because I did not have proof of address with my name on it.

¹³⁷ Spanish: I trust you, you are my first friend out of the movement, you will know it (how to raise a child).

On 14 March 2014, Julieta, Mario and I travelled across São Paulo to visit the Sapopemba Childbirth Centre in the southern part of the city. After some time spent asking round local residents, we finally arrived at a small concrete building, with an ambulance parked outside. When we stepped into the entrance hall, a blonde pregnant woman was already seated in the waiting room. Another lady wearing a white medical jacket welcomed us, mentioning that she would make the introductory tour with us in a few moments. Then, the blonde pregnant woman followed the lady in white into a room next to the hall. We waited for more than an hour. When the lady in white came to show us the premises we could move beyond the internal doors to see the rooms. With three rooms equipped with bathtub, shower and medical bed, the Childbirth Centre was prepared to accommodate up to three deliveries per day and available according to the parturient's preferences. The expectant mother should make an appointment at the unit during her 37th week of gestation, bringing information from all her medical exams. If the pregnant woman was well and did not show any sign of being a health risk, she would attend weekly appointments at the unit and the baby's progress would be monitored and delivery scheduled. Julieta and Mario were encouraged by the unit's well-equipped conditions and decided to proceed with the arrangements in the Childbirth Centre. When we left the place, Julieta took me gently by the arm and exhorted me, *No permita que cualquier tipo de violencia ocurra a mí o al bebé durante el parto*.¹³⁸

On Good Friday 2014, Mario phoned me around 16:00 and informed me that my godson would be brought into the world that day. Julieta and he picked me up at Vila Prudente subway station and we all rushed by car to the Childbirth Centre in Sapopemba. Julieta complained constantly that the car was bouncing too roughly; she was noticeably exasperated with the labour contractions. Luckily, Julieta's midwife friend was able to accompany her too.

At the Childbirth Centre, Julieta was promptly escorted to a room. She demanded of me: *No esqueça la virgen!*¹³⁹, meaning I had to take the portrait of Our Lady of Urkupiña from the car to the room. Julieta took off all of her clothes and put on the blue hospital gown. She was directed by the nurse to try the bed, the shower, the bathtub and the gym ball. In the room, Mario, Julieta's friend, Our Lady of Urkupiña and I tried to comfort her, but she kept walking around the room, the shower and the tub, cursing the pain she felt endlessly: *Carajo!*¹⁴⁰ *Hijo de puta!*¹⁴¹ *Mierda!*¹⁴² and other Spanish curse-words.

After more than eight hours of labour, at 2:07 on 19 April 2014, Julieta finally gave birth to a boy of 51cm length and 3.45 kg weight. She was completely exhausted.

In order to give birth to a healthy child in a situation free of violence or any other complication, Julieta had promised Our Lady de Urkupiña to pay her respects by visiting her sanctuary during the festive days dedicated to the patron saint in Quillacollo. Thus, later that year, in August, Julieta was supposed to travel to Bolivia and fulfil her promise. This would also be a happy opportunity to introduce her son to her family in Quillacollo, the town where she had been born.

¹³⁸Portuñol: Do not allow any kind of violence happen to me or the baby during birth.

¹³⁹Portuñol: Do not forget the holy lady.

¹⁴⁰Spanish: Fuck!

¹⁴¹Spanish: Son of a bitch!

¹⁴²Spanish: Shit!

Julieta invited me to go to Bolivia with her, Mario and their children in August, as I was part of her family by virtue of being her son's godmother. When I accepted her request, she immediately began to make the arrangements to baptise her new-born in Quillacollo's Catholic Church and in the regional Humanist Movement branch there.

Going to Quillacollo revealed the complexity involved in Julieta's sense of belonging. Whereas in São Paulo her Bolivian-ness was mostly manifested through her activism in the social movements' domain as a migrant woman and mother, in Bolivia this Bolivian-ness appeared to be connected to her bonds to religion and family, as a devotee of Our Lady of Urkupiña and a member of the Acosta family.

Being family-on-the-move. On 10 August 2015, around 20:00, Julieta and her children were effusively celebrated as they stepped into Cochabamba's airport. As soon as we had passed the arrivals gate, Julieta, her daughter and baby son were kissed, hugged and cuddled by Julieta's parents, her two sisters, two brothers, and her uncle Cesar. Julieta's father had rented a shuttle just to welcome them. (Due to business appointments, Julieta's husband would arrive three days later.) From the airport, we were driven to Quillacollo, a town neighbouring Cochabamba, where Julieta's family lived. Their house was close to the main square, Plaza Simon Bolívar. Behind a massive metal door, a long corridor led us to a courtyard full of mechanical gym equipment. We were gathered at one of the side rooms off the courtyard. Quotations related to Jesus and Bible verses were hung all over the walls. Everyone was eager to talk to Julieta. Some minutes later, Uncle Hernando and two male cousins arrived as well. The conversation was joyful. Only very late that night, we were given rooms to sleep in on the second floor where Uncle Cesar was finishing building an apartment.

The following days were filled with family catch-up conversations and tours. The kitchen on the ground floor in the courtyard was usually the family's meeting point. In the kitchen, Julieta's mother would prepare the meals for her nuclear family, her brothers and nephews. The Acosta family represented Julieta's maternal part of the family. As the kitchen was small, meals were eaten in turns, depending on the different moments people arrived to have breakfast, lunch or supper. Breakfast on 11 August 2014 had Uncle Hernando, Julieta's father, Julieta, her children and me seated around the table, while Julieta's mother was already preparing lunch. The talk was rich, full of stories of family members or acquaintances in unhappy marriages, unfortunate choices for girlfriends, and people who had recently passed away. In the afternoon, Julieta's cousin, Ignacio, walked with us - Julieta, her children and me - around Quillacollo's cathedral. Julieta and her cousin talked a lot about other people's lives. At the cathedral of Our Lady of Urkupiña, we went to the special chamber in which people were allowed to light candles and pray for the patron saint. There, Julieta spent a long time in silence.

The next day, Uncle Cesar invited Julieta to visit some of the real estate he owned in Sacaba, another district adjacent to Cochabamba. He took Julieta, her children and me in his car. As we crossed the city of Cochabamba to get to Sacaba, Julieta and her uncle talked about local investments. Uncle Cesar had recently come back from Spain, after working there for more than 14 years and was

investing his money in land and private construction in Bolivia. He offered to sell a piece of land in the state of Santa Cruz de la Sierra to Julieta, but she affirmed that she would prefer to buy in Quillacollo. Her uncle mentioned that land in Quillacollo was overpriced because of the local drug cartel investments. In Sacaba, we reached a new housing development area, where many houses were under construction. Uncle Cesar stopped briefly at a relative's house to leave some money for the improvements of the two houses he was building in the area. Then, we stopped at the construction site which he was most interested in as it was the house where he planned to spend the rest of his life. There, two old ladies that called him 'Don Cesar' were living at the back of the two-storey concrete building to prevent property thefts. Uncle Cesar usually spent his time managing his investments in Bolivia, coordinating the construction in Sacaba, the completing of the second floor apartment in Quillacollo, and the estate in Santa Cruz de la Sierra. He planned to visit the estate after the Our Lady de Urkupiña holidays, preparing everything for his wife's and sons' arrival from Spain.

That very same day, Julieta's sister invited us to visit the fast food chain she worked for in Cochabamba in order to try its food. With Uncle Cesar, we all headed to a mall in a prosperous area in the city of Cochabamba and waited for Julieta's sister at the food court. As soon as she arrived, she proudly ordered food. Julieta's sister worked nearby at the fast food chain's headquarters' office, so she finished her workday with us. At night, Mario arrived at Cochabamba's airport.

All these itineraries with family members were a way to immerse Julieta again in the family's everyday tangles. This sense of belonging to an intimate family seemed fundamental to the branch of the Acosta family that Julieta was most attached to. The sense of belonging had been nurtured by the cumulative experience that at least three generations of the Acosta family devoted to maintaining these bonds alongside trajectories of migration inside Bolivia and abroad.

Let us begin with Julieta's mother's story, which she told me whilst performing her numerous daily household activities. On 19 August 2014, assisting Julieta's mother in the kitchen, I asked her whether she was born in Quillacollo. Boiling papas moradas¹⁴³, she replied, *No, nací en Argentina*.¹⁴⁴ She was two years old when her parents decided to live in Quillacollo. Once I had finished slicing the tomatoes and onions for the lunch salad, she continued her story by telling me that she only left Quillacollo again when she was already married and had had her children. She decided to work in Spain in order to offer her second daughter the opportunity to study in a Spanish university. For her daughter to apply for a student visa, she had to prove she had €15,000, *Puedes imaginar 15,000 euros?*

¹⁴⁵ This was the reason Julieta's mother began working excessively as soon as she arrived in Madrid, doing three work shifts: mornings, afternoons and evenings. *Casí no dormía*¹⁴⁶, she commented. Despite almost getting ill during this period, she was able to accumulate the necessary amount for her second daughter's visa in three months. When her daughter joined her in Spain, Julieta's mother would spend five years more without going back to Quillacollo. Only after her daughter graduated with a degree in Management, did Julieta's mother decide to leave Spain permanently. Her daughter

¹⁴³ Spanish: purple potatoes.

¹⁴⁴ Spanish: No, I was born in Argentina.

¹⁴⁵ Spanish: Could you imagine €15,000?

¹⁴⁶ Spanish: I did not have much time to sleep.

also went back to Quillacollo and was successfully employed as the office manager in the previously mentioned fast food chain in Cochabamba. This gave Julieta's mother a sense of familial achievement, *Si yo no trabajaba, mi hija no estudiaría*¹⁴⁷. At that moment, she was concerned with her younger son. Apart from, Julieta, who was married and lived in Brazil, all of her daughters and sons lived together with her and her husband. Her daughters and older son had rooms of their own around the courtyard and she planned to build a new room for her youngest son, who was 12 years old. Seasoning the beef to be grilled for lunch, she exclaimed, *Deseo desde el fondo de mi corazón que Julieta se venga a vivir con nosotros*.¹⁴⁸ And she declared that there was a plan to build houses for Julieta's mother and father, and for all the sons and daughters on a nearby plot of land. Julieta, Mario and 'los enanos'¹⁴⁹ had a place to live there with them.

As mentioned earlier, Julieta's mother's brothers, Uncle Cesar, also spent some years working in Spain and had just returned to Quillacollo. Likewise, Uncle Hernando, the other maternal brother, had spent a period in Spain as well but I never learned his story. These were the siblings closest with one another; the other two male brothers were considered more detached, one living in Quillacollo and the other, in La Paz.

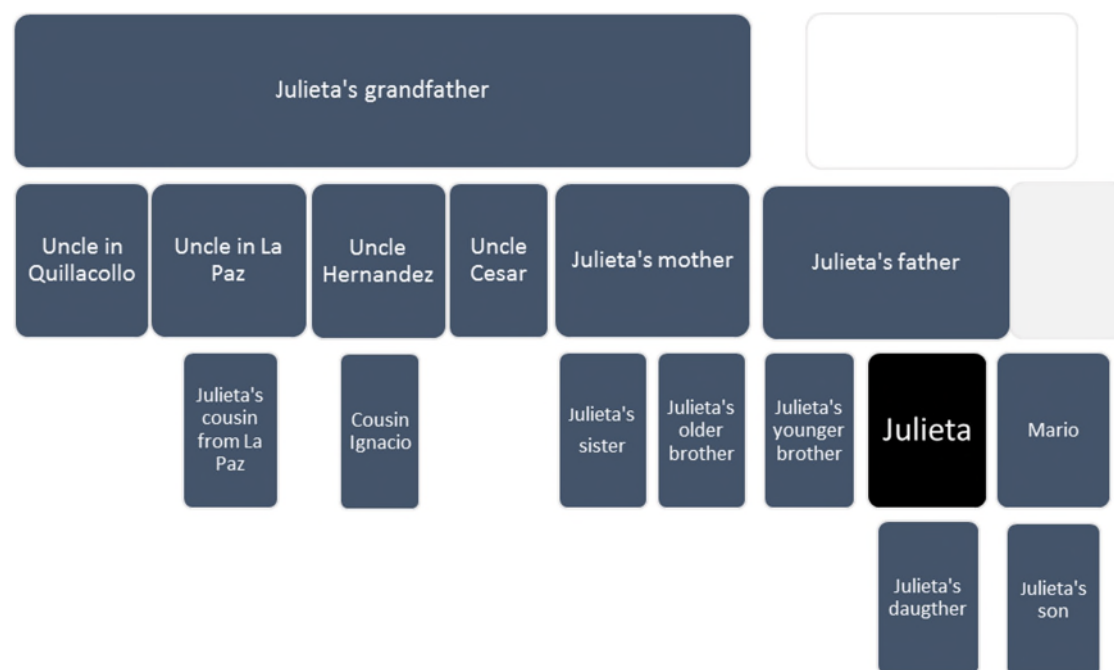


Table 1- Simplified diagram of the Acosta family

Whereas Julieta's mother's siblings' generation had the experience of working in Spain, her maternal grandfather had caused the family to travel around South America, as Julieta's mother was born in Argentina; but he also travelled to work in other cities in Bolivia, such as Pulacayo, where he used to work in the mining business. Julieta's grandfather lived in a room above the courtyard. Elderly and frail, he did not speak or walk anymore. He was kept in a wheelchair during the day and was usually fed by Julieta's mother, Uncle Cesar, Uncle Hernando or one of his grandchildren.

¹⁴⁷ Spanish: If did not work, my daughter would not study.

¹⁴⁸ Spanish: I wish from the depth of my heart that Julieta will come to live with us.

¹⁴⁹ Spanish: informal way to refer to the children: the kids.

While Julieta's mother's part of the family, the Acosta family, had a dominant presence in the everyday life of Julieta's parents' home and had trajectories of migration for many generations, Julieta's father, the one who gave his family name 'Mena' to Julieta, had a similar life-course. Differently from the Acostas, however, Julieta's father did not have siblings or close relatives from the Mena family living in Quillacollo. Instead, he had practically been absorbed into the close-knit branch of Acosta family; he often had lunch with Uncle Cesar, Uncle Hernando and their sons at home.

In the evening of 19 August 2014, Julieta's father was at the gym reception desk as he usually was after his work day in the shoe factory. He was watching the local news on TV and I joined him. He said that in the past he would be working out at the gym at that time of the day, and he would only eat egg white, protein and all the physio culture supplements available. Because of this fixation with his body, he had opened the gymnasium a long time ago. Sitting there, I realised that the gym's entrance walls were full of certificates and documents that proclaimed prizes and accredited knowledge for bodybuilding to Julieta's father and some of his children. Who would imagine that Julieta was the winner of a 1999 young women's bodybuilding contest? Asking Julieta's father where he was born, he straightened his back in the chair and the glasses on his nose, and said, *Nací en Taraja, un pueblo cerca de Quillacollo*.¹⁵⁰ His father was from Taraja, but his parents met in Potosí. He was the second son of a large family. If all the children had survived, the family would have reached ten siblings, but in the end Julieta's father had seven brothers and sisters. They were used to speaking Quéchuwa at that time. During his childhood, he recalled the occasions when his family moved to Argentina, going by train to Oruro, from Oruro to the Argentina-Bolivia border and then to Tucumã, from where they reached Buenos Aires. His family travelled this train route and the reverse numerous times. Julieta's father stressed, *En los trenes de vapor*.¹⁵¹ They would face extreme poverty in Buenos Aires in *las vilas misérrimas*.¹⁵² His family first settled in Quillacollo when his mother's family left them a piece of land where they were able to cultivate vegetables and plants. He used to sell these products on the streets to provide a minimum wage for the family. Located in the southern part of the town, the land offered a wooden shack for them to live in. However, his father was forced to leave for Argentina again and they all followed him, selling the new furniture for low prices and starting life from scratch. When his family finally settled down in Quillacollo again, Julieta's father was eleven years old and he would travel by himself looking for seasonal work such as cleaning coca plantations in other states. For him, the turning point of his life was military service. Laughing, he recalled, *Tenía diecisiete años*.¹⁵³ He forged his identification document in order to get into military service earlier. There, he bumped into a former high school colleague, who after the military service got a job in a shoe factory. This friend then arranged the position in the shoe factory for Julieta's father that he still worked at to the day I talked to him. From that moment on, Julieta's father decided to not lead a nomadic life like the one he had experienced with his parents. Having secured a regular and legitimate job, he wished to get married. He was in love with a girl who did not wait for him during the military

¹⁵⁰ Spanish: I was born in Taraja, a village near Quillacollo.

¹⁵¹ Spanish: By steam trains.

¹⁵² Spanish: In squats.

¹⁵³ Spanish: I was seventeen years old.

service. She dated another boy, got pregnant and married the baby's father. Julieta's father became concerned, *Hasta mi hermano menor se iba a casar*.¹⁵⁴ Then, he met Julieta's mother during the rehearsals of a Caporales¹⁵⁵ group. After six months' dating, they finally got married. Julieta's father reckoned that living abroad gave him many experiences through which to understand what was right and wrong in life. He believed Julieta was in Mario's good hands in Brazil, but he would prefer it if she could live in Bolivia with them. After his retirement in two years' time, he planned to build houses for every son and daughter. He had brothers and sisters in Argentina and the United States, but he never felt very close to them. His life was in Quillacollo and he wished that his whole family could be together. If Julieta and her children lived with them, Mario could start life in Bolivia with their support.

In accessing Julieta's parents' personal histories, it became clearer how the family's migratory experiences over generations had informed their aspiration for cultivating family bonds and the desire to keep close residency in Quillacollo as a familial project.

However, the family's existence was not a bed of roses; it involved divisions. In politics, Julieta's parents supported the 'Movimiento al Socialismo'¹⁵⁶ government, while Uncle Hernando despised it bitterly. Another significant division was religion: since Julieta's father, mother and brothers had become Evangelicals, they no longer participated in the Our Lady of Urkupiña activities or any other Catholic rite; likewise they did not drink alcoholic beverages anymore.

Together with this sense of familial ties which Julieta was enmeshed in in Bolivia, her faith in the powers of Our Lady of Urkupiña also marked her attachment to a certain Bolivian-ness. Whereas in São Paulo (as described earlier) Our Lady of Urkupiña, 'La Virgen', was invoked during the gestation and birth of her second child, Julieta renewed her religious bonds in Quillacollo by praying to 'La Virgen' in the cathedral and making new wishes and promises in her sanctuary site. As I have described Julieta's prayers in the candlelit chamber of Our Lady of Urkupiña's cathedral in Quillacollo's centre; let us accompany her to the sanctuary site at Cerro Calvario where she fulfilled her promises.

Bonds of faith. 16 August 2014, Quillacollo, Bolivia. We were supposed to leave for Calvario¹⁵⁷ at 8:00 but, when my alarm rang at 7:00, I realised Julieta's cousins were just going to bed after spending an all-night karaoke session downstairs. I found Julieta, her father, her mother and Mario in the kitchen. While we were all having some corn bread and cheese for breakfast, Mario, who had not yet slept after the karaoke night, was preparing feijoada¹⁵⁸ for lunch. Around 11:00, Julieta announced we were finally going to Calvario with one of her cousins and his wife. The streets were packed with pedestrians and stalls, especially the 7 de Agosto Street. The crowd walked southward to reach Calvario hill, *Son peregrinos*¹⁵⁹, Julieta pointed out that most of them had begun their march in Cochabamba. Julieta's cousin lived in La Paz and had been visiting Calvario for five years. His wife had accompanied him for the past three years. At the bottom of the hill, the multitude became more noticeable: masses of

¹⁵⁴ Spanish: Even my younger brother was to get married.

¹⁵⁵ Popular dance that has been declared Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Plurinational State of Bolivia recently.

¹⁵⁶ Spanish: Movement for Socialism. It is the political party to which the president Evo Morales is affiliated.

¹⁵⁷ Spanish: Calvary. It is the site where the Our Lady of Urkupiña sanctuary was established, up on the hill Cerro Cota.

¹⁵⁸ Famous pork and black beans stew from Brazil.

¹⁵⁹ Spanish: They are pilgrims.

people covered the path uphill. We stopped at the stalls where miniatures of bank notes, credit cards, cars, trucks, houses, buildings, food, even babies made of cardboard or plastic were being sold. *Vamonos preparar las promesas*¹⁶⁰, Julieta conducted me to one of the stalls and she bought a mini-house with blue tiles and red roof: her next wish and promise to the patron saint. She encouraged me to buy a miniature of a baby, or at least a tiny house. As I did not choose anything, she reproached my lack of desire, *Ay, tienes que querer cosas para tu futuro, negra!*¹⁶¹

A group of people passed by us carrying large pieces of stone in plastic bags. Julieta's cousin explained to me that those people had chiselled these rocks up the hill and were now carrying the stones which represented their wishes to 'La Virgen'. People toiled through collecting these stones in order to solicit the patron saint's favours. Those who have been granted their wishes, had to bring back the stones as recognition of Our Lady's powers. For instance, when people asked for money, they took a rock as if 'borrowing' it from the patron saint. In cases where people were then given the money they asked for, they had to 'pay' back the stone to her. Julieta's cousin remarked that last year he had continued hammering for half an hour - his hands getting stiff - in order to get the piece of stone compatible to his wish. As he did not bring back that stone, I inferred 'La Virgen' did not grant the 'favour'. Going uphill, we walked through a monumental white wired entrance that led to the sanctuary, where a Catholic mass was being celebrated outdoors and flocks of believers gathered. We continued walking to the left, up to the hill behind the sanctuary, where the stone hammering took place. On the sloping path, men and women dressed in colourful gowns waited for people requiring their 'spiritual' services. On the high ground, some families set up camp to spend the day there. Julieta's cousin bought plastic bags for all of us, *Para cargar las piedras*.¹⁶² On the cliff, where one can be enchanted by the vision of the lowlands spreading along the valley, a series of pits held black rock formations in which people were performing reverences to 'La Virgen' or chiselling off bits of stone. A family nearby hired the services of a music band and a 'spiritual' man in order to consecrate their promises. Miniatures of a house, dollar bundles and bags of corn, quinoa and potatoes stood over a colourful cloth on a rock section. The 'spiritual' man splashed some perfume on it, lighted a stick of incense and small firework capsules, finishing the ritual by pouring beer on the miniatures and making each member of the family drink a little from the beer bottle. Julieta's cousin rented hammers for him, his wife and Julieta. Each of them chose a different rock in the same pit to pound. Julieta's cousin bought beer and drizzled it over the part of the rock in which he would invest his efforts. His wife did the same. Julieta began to hit with her hammer without any ceremony. She was battering the rock under the midday sun. Her hammer blow seemed useless before the rock's solidity. There were no visible cracks or fissures. Her cousin and his wife changed strategy and struck at stones incrustated in earth, which gave them pieces of stone the size of their feet. Julieta stood firmly, the palms of her hands reddening. After more than half an hour, the rock suddenly parted. It was a worthy piece of around 20 cubic centimetres! Carrying the stones downhill was another physical task.

¹⁶⁰ Spanish: Let's prepare our promises.

¹⁶¹ Spanish: You have to desire things for your future, dear.

¹⁶² Spanish: It is for carrying the stones.

At the bottom of the hill, we took a shuttle to Julieta's parents' place. By the time we arrived there, Mario's feijoada was almost ready and Julieta was praising herself for asking 'La Virgen' for enough money to make Mario's business sustainable.

Julieta's religious bonds within the popular Catholicism represented by Our Lady of Urkupiña held this pragmatic aspect of being deeply interwoven with her familial life, sustaining her hopes and wishes for successful childbirth, a good house to live in with her nuclear family and enough money to help her husband's business. This familial sense of Catholicism also applied to the baptism of her children in Bolivia. Lack of time meant that it was not possible to proceed with the baptism in the Humanist Movement, so the time available was devoted to make the arrangements for the baptism in the Catholic Church. This rite would reinforce bonds with other members in her extended family and with me. Her older sister and a cousin from La Paz were appointed as her daughter's godparents, and a cousin from Quillacollo and me, her son's godparents. At Quillacollo's cathedral, the one devoted to Our Lady of Urkupiña, documents of Confirmation were requested from all godparents but only Julieta's sister had the necessary papers. As the religious officials in Quillacollo were inflexible on the required document, Julieta's sister contacted the officials in a neighbouring district where only identification documents were requested from the godparents to celebrate the baptism rite. The Catholic baptism of Julieta's children took place on a Saturday in the little town of El Paso, emphasising that sustaining established family bonds was more important than the religious rationality of guaranteeing a legitimate (document-based) Catholic education for Julieta's children. However, this Catholic sense of reinforcing family attachments had to be accommodated with the evangelicalism of Julieta's parents and brothers. As the latter were unwilling to attend the baptism ceremony in the Catholic Church of El Paso, Julieta's parents offered a 'parrillada'¹⁶³ at their home in honour of their grandchildren after the rite. For Julieta, her family in Quillacollo, was the main orientation of belonging in Bolivia. Curiously, Julieta explained this sense of belonging to me through the use of a metaphor.

Rhizomatic dislocations. On 20 August 2014, Julieta, Mario and I were at the waiting room of a dentist who Julieta had known for more than 20 years. Health services in Bolivia were cheap when compared to the same services in Brazil, so Julieta and Mario had decided to have dental treatment in Quillacollo. It was emphasised that this dentist was someone trusted by Julieta's family as he had been Julieta's friend since high school and they all knew his family. I commented that I found it extraordinary the way Julieta was able to follow the lives of the people she had grown up with in her town of origin. Mario recalled that when they got married, Julieta had to move to São Paulo and for two years she greatly missed her family, her friends, the places she used to go in Quillacollo and the food she used to have there. It culminated in a very serious conversation in which she had to make a decision about whether or not to stay in São Paulo. Julieta promptly interjected, *Decidí quedarme con él*¹⁶⁴, and smiled. Mario concluded that since then he had been able to understand Julieta's feelings and everything got better between them. Julieta remarked, *Él sabe que mis raíces están en Quillacollo y*

¹⁶³ Spanish: Barbecue.

¹⁶⁴ Spanish: I decided to stay with him.

*cuando alguien tiene raíces, es fácil saber tu lugar de pertinencia.*¹⁶⁵ This image of roots seems very apt bearing in mind the familial context of migration in which it was enunciated. 'Roots' ensured a point of reference for Julieta to 'grow' in other places in the world as long as her belonging was grounded in her family ties in Quillacollo.

Yet, 'growing' away from the place in which one's 'roots' were anchored could equally offer occasions for destabilising this belonging. On 15 August 2014, Julieta, Mario, four of her cousins, the wife of one of the cousins and I were having meals at Quillacollo's Central Market and planning to prepare together Pique Macho¹⁶⁶ for a familial party the following week. Julieta stated, *Tenemos de ratear los costes.*¹⁶⁷ Instantly, she corrected herself, *Tenemos de tirar el total.*¹⁶⁸ There was silence and abruptly everyone in the table burst into laughter. Her cousin Ignacio teased her, *Si quieres ratear, rateas vos, pero yo no lo hago.*¹⁶⁹ Then, Mario explained me that 'ratear' is a slang word for 'stealing' in Bolivia, though in Portuguese it means 'to share' or 'to split'. All Julieta's cousins mocked her, at the same time chastising her for not being able to speak Spanish anymore.

Another language-related incident took place on 21 August 2014 when Julieta, Uncle Cesar, Mario and I were waiting for Julieta's sister at the food court of the same mall we had visited before in Cochabamba. Julieta advised Mario to buy eyeglass frames in Bolivia because they would be cheaper. Julieta mentioned the word 'armación', very similar to the word in Portuguese 'armação', which is used for eyeglass frames. In taking off his own eyeglasses and manipulating them in front of Julieta, her uncle stressed that the right Spanish word was 'montura', because 'armación' referred to building structures.

Whereas language confusion between Spanish and Portuguese words manifested the ambiguities of having 'roots' in one country and domicile in another, Julieta also expressed these inconsistencies in her trajectory as 'loss of culture'. On 21 August 2014, in commenting that she had forgotten how important it was to offer a party after a child's baptism, Julieta said to her mother, *Creo que me estoy perdiendo las costumbres bolivianas.*¹⁷⁰

Although Julieta had these moments of discrepancy in living between Quillacollo and São Paulo, she had never had doubts about her Bolivian-ness, which was associated to this sense of belonging to a family configuration in Bolivia. As I have described, these family connections grounded her existence as Bolivian and in many ways informed her practices and political performance as a migrant mother in Brazil. Julieta lived between her roots in Quillacollo and her life with Mario and her children in São Paulo, in an existential and ambiguous see-saw itinerary between the two countries.

When we were at Cochabamba's international airport on 24 August 2014, waiting for my return flight to São Paulo, she confided to me that in five years' from that moment she, Mario and her children would possibly be living in Quillacollo. She believed that at some point in their lives, they

¹⁶⁵ Spanish: He knows that my roots are in Quillacollo and, when someone knows her own roots, it's easy to know where one belonged to.

¹⁶⁶ Popular dish in Cochabamba, Bolivia, consisting of bite-sized pieces of beef, sausages and French fry-cut potatoes.

¹⁶⁷ Portuguese: We have to 'ratear' everything.

¹⁶⁸ Spanish: We have to share the costs.

¹⁶⁹ Spanish: If you want to 'ratear', you can do it, but I won't.

¹⁷⁰ Spanish: I believe I am losing Bolivian customs.

would have to return to Bolivia. They were living in Brazil only because of Mario's business, which was not sustainable. Still, her husband did not wish to shut it down, as many of his brothers and sisters-in-law were his employees and depended on it to earn a living. Mario's business did not provide enough profits to pay for Mario and Julieta's work. Mario was working only to maintain the business. Julieta supported him, because that was his dream. Nonetheless, she believed they would be living in Bolivia in the future, as her parents were arranging housing for them. Anyway, she was convinced that going to Brazil had made her a more complete person who was better able to decide her own destiny and resolve issues in her life. She assumed that all her brothers and sisters had personal problems because they were too dependent on their parents and could not handle their lives by themselves. Julieta was aware that living in Quillacollo could also be suffocating because of her family but she calculated that she would be able to deal with this. The only thing she was profoundly concerned about was related to the 'machismo' dominating everyday life in Bolivia. She feared her daughter's future as a girl in Bolivia. Immersed in such doubts, chances and hopes, I left Julieta in order to board the flight back to Sao Paulo.

Only on 12 January 2015, before leaving Brazil after 16 months of fieldwork, would I meet Julieta again in her house in Caucaia do Alto, Cotia. Julieta reported to me that Mario was working constantly. Many orders for his business had been made in the end of 2014 and the aim was to deliver everything on time. This seemed a dreamlike situation, recalling that in the previous year Mario had been considering closing his business. At that moment, the problem turned out to be the excessive work to complete and the management of all employees in continuous operation. Even with this, the business situation was not certain. It still required working capital to keep up the manufacturing so they were planning to mortgage their house in Caucaia do Alto to solve this problem. Again Julieta mentioned the possibility of selling everything and moving to Quillacollo, where her family surely would support them. She was not afraid of failing, because she had her family forever.

As it has been extensively stressed, Julieta's life-journey articulated a sense of Bolivian-ness embedded in overlapping dimensions of diverse involvements that nurtured one another: her activism within migrants' social movements in São Paulo, her intense attachment to family members in Quillacollo, and her faith in performing practices within a popular Catholicism grounded in Bolivia. This Bolivian-ness was lived alongside her continuous engagements in Brazil. Bolivian-ness and Brazilian-ness constituted different aspects of her experiences that could not be merged together. Julieta had never doubted that she was Bolivian, but her increasing immersion in Brazil disturbed this sense of belonging, to the extent that her perception was of moving constantly between two different poles: Bolivian-ness and Brazilian-ness.

In the following life-journey, a similar movement between references of nationality - this time concerning senses of Korean-ness and Brazilian-ness - will be explored through Mr. Soh's life-course.

4.2 WITH MR. SOH

Geounjun was the capital of the Silla Kingdom. This is the place where one of the longest-lasting dynasties ruled and consolidated the incorporation of two other kingdoms, Bekje and Goguryeo. Do you all see these little hills? These are tombs of important people, members of the Silla royal family and its court. You know, Egypt has the pyramids, Silla has these hills. Let's move to that monument... *waenya waenya masisseunikka lalalalala, waenya waenya masisseunikka lalalalala* ... now, here, do you see this huge stone tortoise carrying a placard? This was raised by King Muyeol's son in homage to his father - who was responsible for planning the kingdom's unification. There, on the placard, King Muyeol's name is carved in an ancient dialect. You can take photos of it... *waenya waenya masisseunikka lalalalala*... Are you able to observe the tortoise's back feet? How many toes does each foot have? Sorry, how many? Yes, four toes. Why do you think it has four toes, instead of five? Any guess? Have you noticed that the tortoise's neck is very protruding? Yes? Well, these are signs that the tortoise is moving forward. This tortoise is said to be rushing towards the future, towards territory unification. This makes me think of... *waenya waenya masisseunikka lalalalala*... oh, this goddamn music that's stuck in my brain, hehehe! No, this tortoise makes me think... makes me think that South Korea is still running towards the future, towards the unification of South and North Korea... *waenya waenya masisseunikka lalalalala*¹⁷¹...

It did not happen exactly like this, but on 15 December 2014, when I caught Mr. Soh humming the 'mashiseunnika' song while we strolled around the royal Silla tombs in Geounjun, South Korea, something sparked in me: the realization that all of the places we that we visited and all of the experiences we had been through overlapped each other in very unsettling ways. Representations of the ancient and the new, the traditional and the modern South Korea were made disjunctive because of the personal manner in which he conducted our group trip. The poetics of resonance allowed me to transform the repeated susurrated chorus lines from Mr. Soh – as those songs that sometimes keep buzzing in one's head – into an insight into the unresolved contradictions facing South Korea's modernity. From this moment on, I understood that Mr. Soh was the crucial person to focus on during our travels in South Korea, as the personal experiences he shared with us turned out to be lived

¹⁷¹ Korean: Why? Why? Because it's good. Lalalala. This chorus line is part of the song 'Shall we dance with Dr. Lim', by Lim Chang Jung.

comments on the transformations in education, tourism, and history that the country had strategically undergone in order to become a 'modern' state in global terms.

27 October 2014, Bom Retiro, São Paulo, Brazil. Setting sail. It was not as Mr. Soh had planned it. Out of a group of approximately 200 students of Korean language, a mere ten had decided to travel to South Korea. Dragging his sandals around the office, Mr. Soh declared that he had organised the itinerary for a minimum of 30 people, underlining in accented Portuguese, *Eu dei minha palavra e vou manter o plano original na medida do possível.*¹⁷² The travel plan would no longer include visits to the Samsung plant or the nuclear power station anymore because these tours were only supported for groups of 30 visitors or more. However, the remaining activities were likely to be supported with the standard budget. I agreed to the necessary changes, adding that I had never visited South Korea and was interested in the students' experiences during the trip. Mr. Soh commented that his niece was to join us as well but he was now considering whether or not he should personally accompany us to South Korea.

It was lunch time and we still had to work on the travel contract. Mr. Soh invited me to have bibimpap¹⁷³ while the contract was being processed. I was surprised and happily accepted his offer. He ordered it by phone, speaking in Korean. Half an hour later, two white disposable containers were delivered to his door. This bibimpap was different from the ones I had tasted in other Korean restaurants in São Paulo. It came with whole rice, *Bori*, Mr. Soh taught me. He told me that this kind of rice was cooked by humble people in Korea a long time ago, but nowadays it was preferred by Koreans living in São Paulo because of its healthy quality. Even in South Korea it was hard to find this sort of whole rice, but he knew an old lady in Bom Retiro who was able to prepare it.

Between filling in the required blanks, making changes in the travel contract, and eating sparse spoonfuls of bibimpap, Mr. Soh revealed to me that he was 68 years old. He had arrived in Brazil more than 40 years ago when he was around 20 years old. I asked him in Portuguese whether he intended to stay in Brazil or return to South Korea in the future. He laughed, *Eu não sei quando, mas eu vou voltar pra Coréia*¹⁷⁴, and added, *Alguns animais como o salmão nascem no mar e sobem os rios para se reproduzir, eles deixam seus ovos e voltam pra o mar. O salmão novo vai pro mar por instinto, mas*

¹⁷² Portuguese: I gave my word and I will stick to the plan as far as it is possible.

¹⁷³ Literally 'mixed rice'. Bibimbap is a dish served as a bowl of warm white rice topped with seasoned vegetables, chili pepper paste, fried egg and sliced beef.

¹⁷⁴ Portuguese: I don't know when, but I'm going back to Korea.

*quando precisa se reproduzir volta para os rios.*¹⁷⁵ Puzzled by such an assertion, I chewed in silence on Mr. Soh's wisdom.

After agreeing the final version, we both signed two print-outs of the contract; one for me and another for Mr. Soh's agency. I thanked him profusely for the lunch and confirmed that I would send him the money transfer receipt for the travel that afternoon. We shook hands, slightly bowing towards one another, and I left.

I was convinced that I was travelling in order to follow some of the students from the Korean language classes I had been attending in Bom Retiro. As Mr. Soh became our tour guide, the excursion opened up an unexpected dialogue with his personal memories and experiences, which shaped a specific understanding of Korean-ness according to his own life-journey. Despite the personal interests of other travel participants, Mr. Soh's subjective way of conducting our appreciation of 'what was' South Korea turned out to be the key element through which to approach the sense of Korean-ness offered to these students of Korean language in Brazil. In the end, eight people, including me, signed up for the trip promoted by the Korean language school and organised by Mr. Soh: a mother and her daughter who were attending the same class in Basic Korean as I was; two young brothers whose parents were from South Korea; a middle-aged lady of Japanese background living in the city of Cuiabá; a former female student of the Korean language school; and Mr. Soh's niece.

On 3 December 2014, we all landed at the international airport of Seoul. Mr. Soh had gone to Seoul in advance in order to make the local arrangements for our travel. He was not waiting for us when we made it to the arrivals gate around 16:00, local time. Luckily, his niece had his contact number on Kakao Talk, a very popular mobile phone app among people living in South Korea and South Koreans living abroad: Mr. Soh was stuck in a traffic jam. When he met us at the airport, around 17:00, it was already dark. We took two taxis heading to the city centre. Our hotel was located in Dongdaemun on a small hidden street behind the stores on a busy thoroughfare. I shared a room with Mr. Soh's niece. She taught me to enjoy the heating of the warmed wooden floor, *Korean style*, she observed in English. She was born in South Korea and had been living in São Paulo for only a year. She was fourteen years old and missed her previous life in Seoul very much.

Education as twisted future. Still on that night of 3 December 2014, after our first dinner together in Seoul, Mr. Soh suggested we exercise our bodies as much as we could by walking the neighbouring streets in order to overcome jetlag and sleep well. The area was surrounded by many shopping malls

¹⁷⁵ Portuguese: Some animals like the salmon come from the sea and go towards the spring waters of some rivers to lay eggs and go back to the sea. The young salmon, after sometime, instinctively moves to the sea, but when it needs to reproduce, he goes back to the rivers.

and buildings with stalls where clothes were sold in bulk. The night was freezing and the streets were illuminated by colourful Christmas lights. At the façade of a shopping mall, Mr. Soh stopped the group before a gigantic billboard adorned with the English phrase: 'Our people, our future'. He pointed towards the slogan, proud to say in his accented Portuguese, *O povo é o futuro da Coreia, porque Coreia investiu muito na educação do povo.*¹⁷⁶ He added that many families had sold businesses, houses and family possessions in order to provide their children with a good education and, consequently, to have a better life. For Mr. Soh, this was how Korea had become a developed country. I mentioned to him that my parents had made a similar effort in Brazil - to offer good education for me and my brother. Mr. Soh laughed cheerfully and said, *Tá explicado porque você sabe falar inglês.*¹⁷⁷

As an introductory tour for foreign students, Mr. Soh also led us to visit Hongik University, a private institution of higher education in Hongdae area, the bohemian and hipster district in Seoul. On the chilly morning of 6 December 2014, we stepped onto the university campus. Among the modern buildings of reflective glass, Mr. Soh recalled the war period in the 1950's, observing that that part of the city had been heavily bombed and destroyed. During that time, young people became influenced by socialist theories and radical groups were created, some of them were supplied with armaments from Russia. The country's division into two Koreas was inevitable: the northern side was assembled under Russia's influence and the southern, under the United States' protection. As the lower classes ushered in the move to a socialist government, many high and middle classes families fled to the southern part of the country, fearing low-born wrath and retaliation. Mr. Soh's parents were among the fugitives. After the Korean War and the country's official division into North Korea and South Korea, Seoul had to be totally rebuilt. Hongik University campus was a component of the reconstructed city plan. Simultaneous with the country's efforts to re-emerge from the war damage, the government of South Korea incentivised families to begin life abroad. In the 1970s, when Mr. Soh was a child, Brazil seemed to be a prosperous place. The average income was around US\$1,500, whereas in South Korea, it was around US\$500. Nowadays, the circumstances had reversed, but in the 1970s many people left South Korea heading to Argentina, Paraguay or Brazil. This was the case with Mr. Soh's parents, who chose to go to Brazil. Mr. Soh remembered vividly that he was studying diligently to enter university, *Eu estava estudando pra entrar na melhor universidade da Coreia.*¹⁷⁸ However, his parents were making the arrangements to migrate to Brazil and thus he interrupted his studies as he would more than likely start university there. At the last minute, however, the Brazilian embassy denied entrance to his family and, upset, Mr. Soh was forced to finish his studies in special courses in Seoul. This incident he attributed as the cause of his lower than expected university

¹⁷⁶ Portuguese: People are the future because Korea had invested in people's education.

¹⁷⁷ Portuguese: This is the reason why you know how to speak English.

¹⁷⁸ Portuguese: I was studying to be at the best university in Korea.

admissions performance; thus, his score only permitted him to study Agronomy at the second best university in the country. His parents re-submitted their application to the Brazilian office again and this time they were all granted permission to migrate. Mr. Soh paused in his narrative for some time, *Esqueci porque ‘tava contando isto tudo...*¹⁷⁹ Ah, and recovering the thread of his story he exclaimed, *Agora lembrei!*¹⁸⁰ The lengthy narrative was to tell us that when he was a student in Seoul, Hongki University was geared towards female students in Arts and was not regarded as a respectful higher education organisation. At that time, respectable male students looked to date girls from Ehwa University, the best university for female students in Seoul. Now things had definitely changed and Hongki University had turned out to be one of the best private universities in South Korea even if, during Mr. Soh’s youthful days, men had sought to develop relationships only with women from a similar social status to themselves.

Mr. Soh was this live connection between the old and the new Korea. With his personal exposure to these transformations as an expatriate, visiting South Korea frequently after migrating to Brazil, he felt that his life embodied in some way the inconsistencies and contradictions South Korea went through in its process of becoming ‘modern’ and ‘developed’. For the country to make progress, hundreds of thousands of people had had to leave South Korea to begin a life abroad.

For those who remained in the country, other challenges were at stake. Concerning further education in South Korea, Mr. Soh commented during the same morning at Hongki University campus that the South Korean education system became similar to the American model. Primary and secondary schools were free for every citizen but higher education was paid for, though the government offered subsidies for students to pay reasonable prices to study in many universities. Although basic education was free, it was not equal everywhere. Schools in wealthy neighbourhoods received more donations from students’ parents. Schools attended by higher-class and corporate executives’ children were better equipped and had better staff. As children’s lives were left to their mothers to oversee in South Korea, many middle-class mothers tried to get places for their children in these schools by building a personal network through dinner invitations, children’s birthday parties and other social events. *Nunca se sabe quando uma criança de classe media pode arranjar um bom casamento com os ricos*¹⁸¹, remarked Mr. Soh. These middle-class mothers were called ‘chima-baram’, the swish of a skirt, *Por causa das intensas atividades sociais dessas mulheres, elas não param, ficam correndo pra lá e pra cá*¹⁸², explained Mr. Soh.

¹⁷⁹ Portuguese: I forgot why I was tellin’ this story...

¹⁸⁰ Portuguese: Ah, now I remember!

¹⁸¹ Portuguese: One never knows whether a middle-class child gets a good marriage with wealthy people.

¹⁸² Portuguese: Because these women have an intense social schedule, they cannot stop, they keep running to and fro all the time.

The Korean-ness Mr. Soh expressed through his comments on the sites (and related life stages) in South Korea had this ambiguous quality, carrying the proudness of a transformed nation and at the same time being disconcerted by some consequences of this change.

Fractured histories. In Jeju Island, we were enchanted by the unique volcanic landscapes acknowledged as Unesco World Natural Heritage. Over two days, we visited Halla National Park, the hexagonal volcanic formations of Jusangjeolli Cliffs, Chengyon Falls and Seong Ilseobong mountain. On our way to visit Seongsan Ilchulbong Peak, on 11 December 2014, our shuttle bus encountered a traffic jam, as we bumped into a small demonstration. Protesters, including monks in grey clothes, were gathered at the entrance gate through which large lorries entered the construction area. Mr. Soh explained that the group opposed the development of a military facility. He complained, *As pessoas vêm fazer bagunça, mas a base militar já está 70% construída, por razões de segurança do país.*¹⁸³ As our shuttle bus finally passed by the demonstration, banners stating in English 'Save Gangjoeng Village' were visible. I suggested that the military facility being built would destroy natural assets of Jeju Island, the same natural beauty we had come to see. Silence came over the bus for a while and I recalled reading in Hallasan Park museum that Jeju Island had concentrated many socialist groups in the past that were harshly repressed during the 1940s and the 1950s. At present, Jeju Island still held a label designating it as an 'opposing' part of the country. Its title as 'Special Self-Governing Province' respected in a way this history of conflicts and political movements. Mr. Soh later commented that Chinese people did not require visas to enter Jeju Island; they needed visas only when entering the Korean mainland. They often spent holidays in Jeju Island and had funded many enterprises there. It was strange to learn how ideological positions still fermented fractures within contemporary South Korea.

The travel itinerary across South Korea combined with Mr. Soh's observations sometimes provided a kaleidoscopic collage between the past and the present that rendered a disturbing image of South Korea's transformations.

For instance, when our group was approaching Busan on 12 December 2014, Mr. Soh explained that Busan was the second largest city in South Korea and the country's main seaport. Many South Korean companies - such as Lotte, Hyundai, Samsung, LG and many others - were established there in order to export abroad. The average wage in the area was around US\$50,000/year, while the average national wage was about US\$30,000/year. These figures were being cited when our vehicle was accessing Busan's ring roads and an industrial landscape with metal shipping containers filled our view. Later that day, Mr. Soh remarked that historically the wealthiest part of South Korea was the

¹⁸³ Portuguese: People come to make this mess, but the military base is 70% done, for security reasons.

frontline where the Communist forces from North Korea hoped to gain territory during the Korean War. However, a clever American General came up with the strategy of attacking the North Korean terrain at the Port of Incheon. Once the Americans troops launched their attack, the North Korean army was surprised, as all their forces were concentrated at Busan. Many North Korean soldiers retreated in defeat and the Communist forces ended up losing the war from that moment. Mr. Soh remarked, *Coreia quase se tornou um país comunista*.¹⁸⁴ Busan was not only the historical milestone upon which South Korea was able to resist the North Korean assault during the Korean War, it also turned out to be the iconic hub where South Korea economic vigour found its best expression.

Spoiling visitors. Tourism was another element disturbing the relation between the past and the present in many of the places visited by our group, according to Mr. Soh. As representations of history and tradition in South Korea, some of the tourist sites posed contradictory questions concerning the country's development and its substantiation through touristic consumerism. On 15 December 2014, in the city of Geounjun, the former capital of one of the ancient kingdoms of the Silla dynasty, we visited the mountain tomb of a noble man. We learned that it was not known who was buried there, but researchers believed the deceased was probably a king because of the valuable belongings found with him. Because of a beautiful drawing of a horse painted on a mudguard found among his buried belongings, the noble man was called the Flying Horse King. It was an impressive archaeological site in which it was possible to see *in loco* the detailed burial procedures of the king's remains during the Silla period. A very friendly local tourist guide conducted our visit. In the end, she observed that some people complained about leaving a deceased person exposed for public visitation. In Korean culture this could be a highly disrespectful way to treat ancestors, causing their heirs to be cursed. The Ministry of Culture maintained that the site was open on behalf of education and culture, but the open tomb was ever a delicate controversy.

Leaving Geounjun, we stopped at Seokguram Grotto in the Bulkusa Buddhist complex, which is one of the many Buddhist sites in South Korea considered part of Unesco World Heritage. In this site, the stone sculptured Buddha was carved on a rock on the mountain. The Buddha had a diamond third eye on his forehead and he was gracefully looking east, towards the sea. Some gods and demons protect the Buddha from the worldly domain. People had to climb the mountain to worship him, most usually bowed three times before the Buddha. Because in the past people damaged the sculpture and stole the precious stone, nowadays the sculptures were enclosed in a wooden house, watched over by old female monks. The Buddha was not allowed to look to the sea and the sunrise anymore. Mr. Soh

¹⁸⁴ Portuguese: Korea almost became a Communist country.

blamed the new generations: *Hoje em dia as pessoas não respeitam mais a crença dos outros.*¹⁸⁵ In a country where Christianity had gained converts exponentially in the last decades and Buddhism and Confucianism became elements of what was being presented as traditional, something had changed profoundly in South Korea.

Modernity's fissures. The places and events selected to be part of the travel itinerary by Mr. Soh oscillated between the cultural highlights considered substantiations of traditional Korean culture, and landmarks that represented South Korea as a modern and developed country. On 14 December 2014, we were heading to the Nurimaru APEC House in Busan, the building specially designed to accommodate the 2005 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting. This part of the coast was Busan's most famous aspect: ultramodern glass skyscrapers lined the coast. When crossing Diamond Bridge, the shuttle driver mentioned that, on the other side of the bay, groups of people sued the skyscrapers' condominiums as their houses and buildings suffered from the mirrored light coming from the shiny towers. They won the case but the corporations involved were still appealing the decision. This aspect of Busan offered a sense of imbalanced change, in which the quest to become a developed and wealthy place turned uneasy.

Getting to know global brands created in South Korea was another focus of the trip. We visited a car manufacturing corporation, Hyundai Motor Company, and a Korean pop Music TV show at Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation.

The Hyundai Motor Company was established in Ulsan in 1967, a place that used to be a fishing village on the south eastern coast of South Korea. Hyundai means 'Modernity' in Korean, a name that reveals the desire and intentions of an industrial enterprise in a country in search of transformation. The facilities comprising Hyundai industries' plants in Ulsan can be seen for kilometres away, within the city perimeter. The modernity epitomized by Hyundai Corporation was manifested by an elegant uniformed receptionist at the visitors' centre who spoke in assertive sentences of indisputable figures:

- Global production and sales networks in 200 countries worldwide;
- 34 manufacturing plants in Asia, Europe and America;
- 13 Research and Development Centres connected across South Korea, Germany, India and United States of America;
- 249,366 employees
- Cumulative production of 93 million vehicles;
- Ulsan plant production rate of 100,700 cars/day, almost a car every ten seconds.

¹⁸⁵ Portuguese: Nowadays people don't respect religious beliefs anymore.

Instilled with such conviction in Hyundai's modernity, we visited the company's historical car exhibition and an industrial assembly unit. This dazzling modernity of astonishing numbers could not be photographed for reasons of intellectual property protection.

The same security measures were applied when attending the Korean Pop Music TV show at Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation on 9 December 2014 in Seoul. No pictures or audience manifestation were allowed during the live production. As an international music genre, Korean Pop Music - K-Pop - conquered young audiences around the world through images of coquettish female groups or charming male performers dancing in synchronised fashion. During the TV program, two realities were at play: the reality of TV broadcasting and the reality of the theatre audience *in loco*. Two huge flat TVs facing the audience showed what the whole world outside the theatre was watching, while the people in the theatre experienced something different from it. Some groups of artists sang and danced live, whereas others only stood on stage while the video of a previous performance played on the flat screens. It was disappointing to realise that the majority of the artists had recorded their performances beforehand, and the live broadcast, in fact, was only a composite of these for the TV audience outside the theatre. The music groups generally mimed their singing; they danced energetically but none played music: no musical instrument was on stage. It was unsettling to go to a music program where no one played real music and to see how artists did not interact with the theatre audience. Everything was made up for the TV screen, not for audiences in flesh and blood.

When we left the TV theatre, everyone in our travel group was disconcerted by the experience. Mr. Soh expressed his perplexing exposure to K-Pop by saying, *Tô muito velho pra essas coisas*.¹⁸⁶ Nevertheless he did not disdain the episode; in his easy-going temperament he mentioned that he enjoyed the presentation of the mature male singer who had the hit chorus 'mashiseunnika'¹⁸⁷. He hummed this chorus piece during many moments of our travel, as I have already described through the poetics of resonance at the beginning of this section.

Visits to the Hyundai Motors plant and the K-Pop music TV show were not planned randomly. Through these experiences, another aspect of Korean-ness was being elicited for us by Mr Soh in our trip: the importance of becoming global. In unexpected ways, the internationalization of being Korean posed baffling questions. Hyundai Motors' massive indicators raised the question of whether Korean-ness mattered in a world-scale production. If it did, as in K-Pop music, was it merely a formula - simple musical compositions, elaborate choreographies, and hyper-manipulated images - to be performed as an effort to be part of a modern and global code? Although Mr. Soh believed in these elements as components of what was 'South Korea' for a group of people coming from Brazil, his personal

¹⁸⁶ Portuguese: I'm too old for this stuff.

¹⁸⁷ Korean: Because it's good. This chorus line is part of the song 'Shall we dance with Dr. Lim', by Lim Chang Jung.

comments and acts (drawing on his life experiences) throughout our tour inserted disturbing understandings of it—allowing us to be uncannily aware of the ambiguous and contradictory transformations the country had been going through during the past decades. Hyundai Enterprises and K-Pop music, indeed, were paradigms of the specific ways in which South Korea had gone global.

Taste of Brazil. Finally, Brazilian-ness gained a particular twist in our tour with Mr. Soh. Because we travelled during the winter season, he organised for our group to enjoy some days in a ski resort in Gangwon province. There, he decided to prepare a ‘Brazilian’ barbecue on 19 December 2014. By ‘Brazilian’ he referred to the coarse salt used to season meat, a method not found in South Korea. He hired a private room in the hotel restaurant, equipped with the regular ‘Korean’ top table barbecue grill. Mr. Soh prepared the Korean meat cuts with coarse salt that he had brought from Brazil. While everyone sat around the table eating the slices of beef or pork prepared on the grill, Mr. Soh was rejoicing over the food and drinking beer. I asked him whether he liked living in Brazil. He grinned and replied, *O Brasil me ensinou a aproveitar a vida.*¹⁸⁸ We did not know at that moment, but Mr. Soh would spend the whole night drinking sochu. The next morning, the two brothers who were staying in the same bedroom with Mr. Soh knocked on the ladies’ bedroom to report that Mr. Soh had arrived drunk during the early hours and was sleeping on the couch in the bedroom. We had breakfast and, at the end of the morning, Mr. Soh was finally up and ready to take us to the ski station. That afternoon, his sister and brother-in-law visited our hotel to spend the day with him. Only days later, when we were heading back to Seoul, did Mr. Soh reveal that the barbecue night had been his birthday—celebrated with food he considered to be ‘Brazilian’!

Mr. Soh did not have any doubt that he was Korean, but he was conscious that living in Brazil provided him with different experiences. He lived in this suspended situation of knowing that he would go back to South Korea in the future. Simultaneously he acknowledged that Brazil, in a way, was also part of his life. As the salmon in the sea, he would recurrently visit the fresh waters of South Korea many times during his life-journey.

¹⁸⁸ Portuguese: Brazil taught me to enjoy life.

I have emphasised above how the life-journeys of Julieta and of Mr. Soh alike contained an understanding of ethnic belonging as key references in their life trajectories. Whereas Julieta articulated her Bolivian-ness mostly through attachments to a transnational familial project, religious bonds with Our Lady of Urkupiña and activism in migrants' social movements in São Paulo, Mr. Soh expressed his Korean-ness by way of a personal testimony on the historical changes South Korea had undergone in order to become a 'modern country'. Differently from Mr. Kwon and Mrs. Lee, Julieta and Mr. Soh may not have categorised their ethnic affiliation as being morally 'better' than other nationalities but all four of them shared an aspiration for the future: to live again in the place they considered to be their country of origin.

Julieta and Mr. Soh had each a different experience by being Bolivian or Korean in São Paulo, but each of them also acknowledged their involvements in Brazil as important contributions to their life-journeys. Sometimes, Julieta had the feeling she was 'losing' some Bolivian customs or words in Spanish. Still, she admitted that moving to Brazil had made her a more independent person, as compared to her siblings. Similarly, Mr. Soh recognised that Brazil did not turn out to be the prosperous country that it was meant to be at the time his nuclear family migrated. Yet, Brazil had taught him how to 'enjoy life'.

I called these courses in-be(ing)tween life-journeys because, while Julieta and Mr. Soh kept their respective nationalities as core orientation in leading their life-courses, they also regarded their experiences in Brazil as contributing elements to it, in a contrasting yet at the same time aggregating manner.

The in-be(ing)tween-ness conveyed here does not refer to liminality (Van Gennep 1909, Turner 1967 and 1969) or its associated ideas, in which a person is situated in a provisional state or position between two structured poles, following a process of separation, suspension and re-assimilation. In the liminal period, the subject supposedly holds no status, rank or class, as a consequence of her or his hold-up moment in the process. As the life-journeys of Julieta and Mr. Soh reveal, their in-be(ing)tween-ness is not a temporary aspect that leaves behind a previous national affiliation and reaches another one ahead. The in-be(ing)tween-ness was permanently constituent of their life-courses and the oscillating movement intrinsic in them did effect the world in which they circulated.

For the same reason, the in-be(ing)tween-ness of Julieta and Mr. Soh were not brought forth as discursive identity strategies of hybridisation. It was not about creating a space between 'cultures' in order to reconstruct a hybrid subject meant to express this uncanny position, as never being at home anywhere as the condition of this hybridity (Bhabha 1994). Nor was it the process of merging categories generating hybrid ones, such as syncretism, mestizaje, creolization, etc. (Canclini 1995). The in-be(ing)tween-ness of Julieta and Mr. Soh was lived experience taken along their respective strivings to make the world something of their own. For instance, to make family by circulating between São Paulo and Quillacollo in Julieta's case; to offer personal appreciation of travel itineraries between São Paulo and South Korea in Mr. Soh's case. Julieta and Mr. Soh were 'at home in the world' (Jackson 1995) for the simple reason of being alive and taking advantage of the resources available in the course of their lives in Brazil and in Bolivia or South Korea. Additionally, neither of them considered

themselves as embodying a mixed category. Mr. Soh considers himself a Korean, while Julieta, a Bolivian. But they were, respectively, Korean and Bolivian with significant experiences in Brazil, experiences that changed substantially the way they saw their lives.

The in-be(ing)tween-ness evinced in the life-journeys of Julieta and Mr. Soh was about making the conjunction between their sense of belonging as being Bolivian or Korean with their experiences in Brazil so as to result in an enlargement of possibilities and capabilities for their life-journeys.

In this way, Julieta's and Mr. Soh's life-journeys reveal what the notion of transnationalism (Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton1992) emphasises as the multiple relations migrants maintain simultaneously between what is considered 'home society' and 'host societies' that span borders.

This multiplicity as part of the in-be(ing)tween-ness of Julieta and Mr. Soh was manifested in their life-journeys as an excessiveness of dimensions comprising themselves. In Julieta's life-journey, the abundance was expressed in the inter-relatedness between her attachments to family members in Bolivia and her nuclear family in São Paulo, her position in the migrants' social movements, and her commitment to popular Catholicism practices. In another way, Mr. Soh's profusion was manifested through the stories or comments he shared when we visited numerous sites during our travels in South Korea.

To be sure, this excessiveness in their life-journeys was not lived comfortably at all times. Sometimes, it precipitated textures of fuzziness and ambiguity in Julieta's or Mr. Soh's course. I hope the scenes animated by a poetics of resonance were able to articulate this imprecision that is part of living under the multiplicity of in-be(ing)tween life-journeys.

Perhaps because of the muddling aspect of this lived multiplicity, both Julieta and Mr. Soh relied on the polysemy of metaphorical images to describe their lives. In order to explain to me their need for their oscillating movements between Brazil and their country of origin, they resorted to allegories of the natural world: Julieta referred to her transnational Bolivian-ness in terms of 'roots'; Mr. Soh alluded to his transnational Korean-ness in terms of a 'salmon' navigating between 'sea' and 'rivers'. Perhaps because they were able to constantly move to and from their ethnic references, they ended up in positions in São Paulo that allowed them to introduce Bolivian-ness to Brazilian public policies, in Julieta's case, or Korean-ness to students of Korean language in Mr. Soh's example.

The contradictions contained in Julieta's Bolivian-ness and Mr. Soh's Korean-ness were manifested in the uneasiness of being persistently required to choose between one ethnic affiliation or another; yet it remained the case that the ambiguities contained in their life-trajectories did not fit the rationale of belonging to only one of them.

CHAPTER 5

JOURNEYS OF BECOMING

The life-journeys grouped here under the denomination of 'journeys of becoming' are ones in which people did not feel attached to a specific sense of belonging: in very particular ways their life-course led them to disturb expectations of ethnicity, nationality, kinship and/or citizenship. In following the lives of Liu and Helen in São Paulo, below, we shall find ID cards and family assuming unsettling usages, usages that make sense only through the particularities of their respective lives.

I can't tell you that this is none of your business, so I tell you that my husband had another wife before me in the US and he doesn't want to see her again. Yes, I can't go to the US for now, but you won't know why. Life in the US was good. There, when people are made redundant, they receive six months of compensation payments from the employer. If someone wants to have fun, it's not expensive to do so. When I went to Disneyland, I paid 70 bucks and was entitled to go back whenever I wanted for a whole year. Not that I did it, but it was an awesome deal. I was with friends from the university. You know, my closest friends in the university were Japanese. The Japanese are the best in everything. And every Japanese person I know is very kind and faithful. Yes, I studied in a state university in the US. But now this is past. I look forward to the future. And the US is not in my future anymore. Let's not speak about the past. I have the right to remain silent about it. Because my life is bigger than my days in China or my days in the US. My life is so big that I can omit entire sections and still have a whole life to live and to dream about...

Liu did not want to disclose the reason why she and her husband could not go back to the United States. It was fair enough. In life, no one actually knows everything about anyone. Why did I assume that I had the license to know everything in the name of 'science'? From snippets of different conversations, I knew pieces of information about Liu's life in the US. But not knowing everything about this part of her life did not make my knowledge worthless. Quite the reverse, it sounded more humane. For there is always something untold and unreachable in any being and in any encounter that must be respected. In resorting to a poetics of resonance, I clarified this condition to myself: how knowledge must revolve around limits, respecting the inscrutable in someone else's life and making it part of ethnography.

From Liu's declination to disclose part of her personal trajectory, I was able to appreciate her life better and more sympathetically. Alternatively, her life-journey allowed me, through operating a poetics of resonance, to know as follows:

28 July 2014, Bom Retiro, São Paulo, Brazil. *Tá pegando fogo!*¹⁸⁹, I yelled at the rear area of my flat. Enormous flames flashed up from the other side of the wall, splashing light and sound like thunderbolts. Thick smoke spread over the open space shared with several other flats within the building. Oh, goodness, it was not the first time that this had happened. Some days before, I arrived home and the penetrating stench of carbonised smoke invaded my nostrils. I had rushed around the rooms looking for any device that I might have forgotten to turn off. At the rear area, the smell became more intense and I noticed that all the clothes hanging out to dry were black with smoke. I had to wash them all again. Some neighbours knocked on my door accusing me of causing the incident, but I

¹⁸⁹ Portuguese: It's on fire!

was not the one to blame. It was the neighbour who lived opposite my rear area! It was not fair. These fire had to cease and I dashed out to the street to ring the culpable neighbour's bell. A female voice answered the intercom and I introduced myself in Portuguese as her neighbour. From the balcony on the first floor, a girl in a ponytail peeked down. I shouted in Portuguese that I wanted to talk with her, making exaggerating gestures. She vanished from sight and a few seconds later the entrance door was electronically unlocked. I went upstairs and rang her apartment's bell. The same girl came to the door and I asked in Portuguese whether or not she was able to understand me. As she kept staring at me, I tried to speak in English. She immediately smiled and nodded yes. I continued:

Sorry, you were cooking outdoors...

Yes, I don't have kitchen.

Every time you cook outdoors... how can I say?

The smoke...?

Yes, the smoke goes into my area and my clothes become smoky.

Oh, I'm sorry about that. I knew about the smoke, but I did not know where it was going.

Ok, I was in my kitchen when suddenly I saw flames. I thought your area was on fire...

Sorry about that. I was cooking dumplings, but they were frozen, so I did that. I'm pregnant and I was hungry.

Oh, how many months is your pregnancy now?

Ten weeks.

Oh, congrats.

Where are you from?

Ah, I was born here in Brazil, but I have a Japanese background. And you, where are you from? Mainland China.

How long have you been here?

Thhee munf...

Sorry...

Thhh munf.

Oh, three months... What's your name?

Liu.

Liu, I'm Simone. Well, I'll talk to you again. I'm thinking of placing a curtain between our rear areas.

Ok, sorry about that.

When I returned to my flat, I wondered if Liu would need help to see a doctor during her pregnancy. Two days later, I visited her again, bringing a box of dumplings, informing her that my partner and I had installed a plastic divider between our rear areas, and offering my help in case she would like to see a doctor in the Brazilian public health care system. She thanked me a lot saying I was very kind and we exchanged mobile numbers.

The next day, Liu shouted from her rear area, *Sweetheart, are you at home?* As I was not sure whether or not she was calling for me, I responded, *Liu, are you talking to me?* She yelled affirmatively. So, I confirmed, *Yes, I'm at home. How are you?* She replied, *I'm fine. Could I visit you now?* I agreed

and a few moments later she was buzzing the intercom. I opened the front door and she came upstairs to my front door. I invited her to come in. She entered and was about to take off her shoes. I told she did not need to do that. I invited her to sit down on the sofa in the living room. She took a seat and, while turning on her mobile, she proposed, *Honey, my husband and I would be happy to share the Wi-Fi and pay for half the internet bill.* I was startled at her request. She added, *I need it to call people in China, it's cheaper, you know.* She even asked for the name of my flat's Wi-Fi point in order to check at her home whether it would have a strong or weak signal from her mobile. I provided her the Wi-Fi name and said I would discuss her proposal with my partner, as I did not live by myself. And as he was not at home at that moment, I could only have an answer later that night. Liu became visibly upset and mentioned that we could ring her bell very late that night. She was about to leave, but I asked her if she would like to have a glass of water or a cup of tea. In fact, she was curious to see the kitchen in my flat. Surprised, she remarked, *Oh, the cooker is inside...* Liu would also ask about the rent as we compared the amount each of us paid to the landlord. She found rent in São Paulo for a one-bedroom flat very expensive. I agreed with her and she commented:

It's difficult to have a child in a one-bedroom place. Aren't you planning to have one?

A baby... oh, not so soon – I confessed.

I only want to give birth and leave for a better life for my child.

Hmm... where to?

United Kingdom. I will have my child and get the Brazilian citizenship. I know that it's easy to go there with a Brazilian passport. You know, I lived for ten years in the United States and I finished university there.

And what did you study?

Education.

Oh, maybe you could teach in Brazil. There are some schools in São Paulo that have lessons only in English.

And could they hire me?

Yes, but you need Brazilian documents. Do you have any?

Oh, no, I will give birth and I'll receive the Brazilian documents.

But you have rights. I know that Bolivians, Paraguayans easily get Brazilian documents.

I talked to a lawyer and he told me that only through childbirth I can get Brazilian documents. It's more difficult for Chinese people.

Really? I'll try to check on this.

Very late that night I phoned Liu to say that after talking to my partner we decided that it was too early for us to share any bill with her and her husband.

Having arrived recently and without documents for temporary or permanent residence in Brazil, Liu and her husband were not able to be signatories of any kind of contract in the country. In order to get access to services, they had to find other people to be account holders for them—as indirectly she tried to fix with me and my partner in the matter of Wi-Fi. I suspected that the lease agreement for their flat had a comparable arrangement, as I remember visiting that flat many months before when I was new in the building and knocking on all my neighbours' door in order to introduce

myself. A middle-aged man used to live in Liu's flat. He mentioned to me he was half-Chinese and half-Korean. The real estate agency had given me a female western name as the tenant of that flat, though.

It would not have been surprising if Liu and her husband were interested in getting a proper visa in order to make their lives in Brazil easier: being able to have access to regular services or formal job contracts in the country without resorting to intermediaries or depending on informal relationships. However, their plan was far more complex: they wanted to have what Liu called 'Brazilian citizenship' with the ultimate intention to go to the United Kingdom. They had been told it was easier to get to the UK with a Brazilian passport than with a Chinese one. Nonetheless, being considered Chinese citizens without proper visas, they would only be allowed to have 'Brazilian citizenship' in the case of their having had a child born on Brazilian soil. It sounded a very unusual project that I was only able to better understand after many other meetings with Liu.

Aside from declining to 'share' the Wi-Fi and other 'favours' - such as 'lending' them a credit card in order that they might buy a cheaper baby layette - I made it clear to Liu that I could assist her with gaining access to the public services she was entitled to in Brazil. Furthermore, I was happy to share information about public and non-governmental organisations through which she might regularise her and her husband's immigration status. As a minimum, she had found in me someone that could help her in her pregnancy medical appointments, as she did not speak Portuguese and it was rare for staff in health units to speak English or Mandarin. On 25 August 2014, therefore, Liu phoned me to say she had a medical appointment late September and would like me to go with her. I suggested meeting her the next day in order to set it right.

The following day, we sat together in a café near our flats. I asked her where we should go for her medical appointment and she showed me an ultrasound image from the public hospital Santa Casa de Misericórdia. It was uncommon for a pre-natal monitoring to be led by a hospital in the public health care system in Brazil, as patients were directed to hospitals only for specialised procedures or for an emergency. Even so, I commented that Santa Casa was a good medical institution in São Paulo and she was lucky to be cared for there. With experience from Julieta's migrant women's organisation and Kitty's case, I enquired of Liu about a health system card and an appointment booklet. Sipping orange juice, she declared, *I have the card already*. And the booklet? She did not have one. And I asked her how she knew when to go for her medical appointment. She replied, *I don't have a date, but I was told to see a doctor in the end of September*. I questioned why she had gone to Santa Casa and she explained, *I was bleeding and the Chinese lawyer told us to go there*. I inferred that her pregnancy had been classified high-risk. *No, the baby is alright, I'm fine, the doctor told me*, she clarified. As she was well and I was not sure Liu was registered in the public prenatal program for pregnant women, I proposed going with her to the district health unit in the following days in order to check her situation in the public health system. Before agreeing, she asked me, *Is it for free?* I smiled and confirmed, *Yes, it is*, being mindful that tax payers in the country funded this sort of public service.

Liu insisted on paying for my coffee and before we said goodbye, we strolled around some blocks in Bom Retiro, because she wanted me to show her some places that I supposed were owned by people from China. They were all restaurants, serving different sorts of food. The first one was a

pastel¹⁹⁰ and yakisoba¹⁹¹ place, where an 'Asian'-featured lady behind the counter was talking to other 'Asian' people inside. When Liu heard them speaking, she guessed they were probably from southern China as she could not understand their dialect entirely. She refused to try to make contact with them in that moment, remarking pejoratively, *They are all peasants*. We kept walking, heading to the second restaurant, which she instantly recognised, observing at its entrance that 'hot pot' was served there. In front of the last restaurant, she said that it was a very expensive place serving good seafood that should be eaten in large groups of people. Turning the corner with Liu, it was obvious that she was aware of the presence of some of these people from China and the places run by them in the neighbourhood. At the same time, with me, she did not want to be directly attached to the Chinese group living nearby. She preferred to hold on to a personal distinctiveness that she gradually revealed to me in our conversations when I escorted her to the health unit in Bom Retiro.

Two days later, Liu and I visited the aforementioned health unit. As no one there was able to speak English or Mandarin, I mediated the conversation. When I enquired in Portuguese about Liu's situation in the health system, we learned that it was recorded that Liu had been to the unit once to take in the health system card, but her registration was not completed because the community health unit agent who visited her at home could not speak English or Mandarin. On this occasion, Liu had understood that the agent was instructing her to go to the health unit only on the fourth month of gestation. So many misunderstandings... Finally, Liu was to be officially included in the unit's pre-natal monitoring and I became the translator between Liu and the female nurses. Because she had already had the ultrasound test from Santa Casa confirming her pregnancy, she did not have to undergo the pregnancy strip test, but she had to show her passport to fulfil the requirements to be registered. After filling in some forms, receiving an appointment booklet with dates to see the nurses or the unit's doctor, Liu was prescribed with folic acid and anti-pregnancy-sickness pills. When we were leaving the unit, the nurses requested that I accompany Liu in her future appointments at the health unit.

On 1 September 2014, walking to the health unit with Liu around 6:45 for her first blood tests, she asked me, *Do you know if people here can buy the houses they live in?* I said that at that moment there was a housing shortage in São Paulo; consequently, the majority of people living in the city did not own their houses and paid expensive rents – as we both were was facing. Real estate owners were benefited by the lack of land-use policies and sometimes preferred not to let their properties, speculating for higher real-estate prices to appear on the market. There were also people acquiring properties in São Paulo as investments, not as homes. At the same time, governmental social programmes were still insufficient to provide decent housing for everyone in need; the city still had numerous shantytowns and squats. Prompted by my brief explanation, Liu commented that in China the central government was expelling peasants from land they used for cultivation in order to build residential and business towers. For this reason, China was not producing enough food for its population anymore and was having to import massive quantities. Problems concerning life in China

¹⁹⁰ Common oil-fried snack in Brazil, consisting of rectangle-shaped thin crust pies with assorted fillings, such as minced beef, cheese, chicken or other combination. It is usually sold in street markets or in fast-food shops known as 'pastelarias'.

¹⁹¹ Noodles served with chopped beef and vegetables, often mentioned as a dish from Chinese cuisine in Brazil. However, the dish name is Japanese, 'yaki' meaning chopped food, 'soba' meaning noodles.

and Brazil were frequently a theme raised by Liu in our meetings. She critiqued these places that denied her the necessary well-being that she and her husband were in search of.

On 27 October 2014, Liu and I were walking back to our respective home together after another medical appointment, when she asked if I could help her to apply for permanent residency in Brazil after her baby was born. I readily agreed and informed her that we should look for information at the Brazilian Federal Police, the administrative organization responsible for immigration affairs in the country. She also mentioned she wanted to obtain a Brazilian tax payer number. I considered this last request as an indication that she intended to stay in Brazil. She denied this immediately, *No, I don't want to stay here! Schools and health care are not good. People have to spend too much money to have good quality education or health care.* She noted that a Chinese friend of hers spent around R\$25.000 (≈ £5,000) per year to maintain her child in a private school, as the public ones in Brazil were very problematic. When we were to cross one of the streets on our way, she admitted, *With my husband's earnings, we could not afford to give good education to our children.* After some moments of hesitation, she sighed, *If we fail to go to Britain, we may think of staying in Brazil...*

Going back to China was not a desired option for Liu. In fact, China meant the impossibility of reaching the good life Liu imagined for her family. On 3 November 2014, while having lunch with Liu at the pastel and yakisoba place, she complained, *I don't like Chinese people, I don't like to be Chinese, in China people are not free, everyone has to ask permission for everything, for moving to a new place, for having a child; if I wish to go to Hong Kong, I should ask permission to go there, while Brazilians can have free access to Hong Kong, I can't, I can't live in China; I want to live in Europe, where my children can have a good life, for free.* Roused by dissatisfaction, Liu added that even her mother was leaving China, as she had got married again to an American and next year she was to go and live in the United States, probably in New York. Liu's father was also leaving for the United States with his new wife but he was probably going to the west coast. Liu already had an uncle living in Los Angeles as well. Liu planned to visit China six months after her baby was to be born, to introduce her new child to her mother and to bring back her oldest son, who was living with her mother. After this, she believed, *I won't see my mom and dad very often, my family will be apart.* The family house, situated in a small town in the north part of China was to be sold. Liu was dissatisfied that her family would not get a good price for it, as it was located in a rural area. Nevertheless, in order to travel to China, Lin needed Brazilian documents – such as identification papers and a passport - for her future new-born baby. She also wanted to have Brazilian 'citizenship' after the baby was born so that she could receive a Brazilian passport as well: the key to accessing Europe in her plans. Liu did not finish her meal that day.

Although a large part of her family in China was moving to the United States and Liu herself had lived there for many years, the United States was no longer a possible country to live in. On 19 November 2014, having lunch again with her, this time in a fancy kebab restaurant in Bom Retiro which she believed had a 'good environment' I asked her why she did not want to go back to the United States. After all she had graduated there and, from her point of view, it would be a better place than Brazil. While we waited for our orders, she justified herself: *My husband had another wife before me in the US and he doesn't want to meet her again.* I was not convinced by her reply, as the United

States was so vast a country and it would be possible to live away from a former wife easily. It seemed that something had happened to her and her husband in the United States such that they were not allowed to go there anymore, but she did not disclose this to me – at least not openly.

Whereas China and Brazil were not considered ideal nations to offer the ‘good life’ Liu was pursuing, Europe had an incontestable appeal for her dreamlike future, in perplexing ways. During our conversation on 27 October 2014, when she declared she planned to live in the United Kingdom, I questioned where exactly she intended to go. *Scotland*, she responded right away, *We want to go to Glasgow, my children will have good education and health care there, and it’s a place full of job opportunities*. Bewildered by such certainty, I guessed she or her husband might have known someone who was living there. *Oh, no we don’t know anyone in Glasgow; a Chinese lawyer told us everything; it was the same with Brazil, we knew a lawyer in China who said Brazil was a place full of opportunities, and here we are*. This lawyer was the one who had assured Liu that she and her husband would be allowed to gain permanent residency in Brazil, once they had a child born in the country. This was exactly what they were doing in São Paulo. But Brazil was only a part of their larger plan, as Liu always intimated, *Could I go to UK without a visa if I have a Brazilian passport?* I tried to explain that someone travelling for tourism to the UK with a Brazilian passport did not have to get a visa before arriving there. The tourist visa would be issued by an immigration official at the airport when disembarking at a British destination. However, the border control official would ask many questions and possibly require proof of sufficient resources for staying in the UK as tourist. In case of suspicion that the traveller intended to stay in the country illegally, the official was authorised to reject admission. Liu became angry and argued with me, *No, this cannot be true, they cannot deny entry for people who have the right to go there*.

In essence, Liu’s sense of ‘right’ and ‘citizenship’ had a particular inflection, bound largely to her striving to not be limited to being Chinese and to living in China. In search of a ‘good life’, which in her frame of reference was available only in places such as the United States or the United Kingdom, she was performing a necessary transition in Brazil. Having a child on Brazilian territory would mean that she would obtain national rights, such as permanent residency in the country and Brazilian documents; her attentions were focused on how the Brazilian passport would affect her longer-term circumstances. This was fundamentally what it meant to Liu to acquire ‘Brazilian citizenship’: legal procedures to provide her and her nuclear family with administrative papers to move on.

Learning Portuguese was not part of Liu’s idea of attaining Brazilian citizenship, as she believed her stay in the country would be short and I was available to accompany her to medical appointments. I had frequently suggested places where she could learn Portuguese for free, but she had never given much importance to this. Learning Portuguese turned out to be relevant only when she discovered she had to provide proof of proficiency in the language to apply for Brazilian citizenship within the naturalisation process. One of the themes in our conversation on 3 November 2014 was exactly about this. *Do you know if the Portuguese test for foreigners is easy?*, Liu asked me. I said that the test was new and I did not consider it very easy, as I was also helping a young lady born in South Korea to prepare for it. *Some Chinese told me that it’s easy to bribe officials and pass the test*, Liu continued. I replied that I could not say anything regarding that information. She was suddenly

alarmed, *Maybe it's not true, maybe it's Chinese people lying to me only to get my money, and she grew irritated, Now I have to learn Portuguese!*

In January 2015, Liu was already eight months pregnant, going to the health unit fortnightly to be closely monitored. As I was about to finish my fieldwork period and return to St Andrews, she asked me to show her the place where she could have the baby's birth registered. On 5 January 2015, Liu, her husband and I walked to the local notary's office a few blocks from our building, after one of Liu's medical appointments. A black female office worker informed us that Liu and her husband were to bring the hospital's birth record and their passports. The procedure would be free of charge. The father was able to register the child without the mother, but the mother was unable to register the child under the father's name without his presence. Thus, Liu's husband had to attend the notary's office during working hours. After the emission of the child's birth certificate, they would be allowed to get the baby's national identification. When I translated this information to Liu, she was visibly happy. With the child's birth certificate, she and her husband were able to proceed according to their plans.

Liu's life-journey was undeniably directed towards searching for a 'good life' for her and her family. In this quest, she developed an acute critique about the country she had been born in and other places that could not offer the necessary conditions to provide the well-being she expected. No national borders or identities were substantial enough to prevent her from trying to achieve her goal. She did not hold being 'Chinese' in high esteem, she did not appreciate it, but at the same time she did not envisage herself personifying any other specific nationality. For her, nationalities seemed to be a matter of legal performance, worth attaining only when they allowed her to reach her good life. Nationalities were worked on mostly as bureaucratic citizenships. Her first attempt to have a 'good life' in the United States was interrupted by something she did not reveal to me. During her stay there, she had been proud of herself for getting a higher education degree in an American university. Not pleased to go back to China, she and her husband came up with another possibility: getting another nationality that would allow them to access another English-speaking nation in which a good life would be possible for them: the United Kingdom. This is how Brazil became included in their plans: Brazil was the place where they were able to reformulate their lives and nationalities in order to have the chance to find an easier way to a desired life in another country. The key element to this strategy was to give birth to a child on Brazilian soil.

My dear child, you don't know yet how passionately you are being awaited in our lives. You're the future. You're our future. Everything now is because of you and for you. Through you, a good life is being made tangible and necessary. When you are born, we will all be born again through you... in a new life.

Helen has been already introduced through the poetics of resonance in Chapter 1. The many elements of her life that were brought to my attention through the operation of my imagining her can be fully appreciated by understanding some moments of her own life-journey as she shared them with me.

16/02/2014

Minha primeira aula de português

Eu sou coreana (Corea do Sul) casado com brasileiro 6 anos atrás. Nos morava no Japão 10 anos atrás. Mas eu nunca estudar português na escolar. Por que não tem tempo por estudar. Quando cheguei aqui, eu não entendia conversação. Tudo pessoas falar muito rápido.

Eu quero vai escolar per estudar português, mas agora tem filha, não pode ir escolar durante a semana.

Eu vi cartaz este aula de português em Bom Retiro na frente do supermercado coreano duas semanas atrás. Meu marido falou: ele Eu ajudar você. Eu leva você aula de português e brincar com bebe durante aula.

Por isso eu atender atendi aula de português.

Na aula tudo mundo falou español, não só eu.

Professora Simone falou português durante da aula. Eu não entendi tudo. Não falei bem, mas este aula é bom pra mim. Eu gostei.

Horario da aula mudou mais cedo de manhã, mas eu quero atender este aula.¹⁹²

This was how Helen was making sense in Portuguese of the first time we met. I had volunteered to teach a class, Basic Portuguese for Non-Brazilians, in a public school in Bom Retiro on Sundays. Among 18 Spanish speaking adults in the classroom, Helen was the only 'Asian'-featured face there. This visual and acoustic panoramic evidence was already an evocation of Helen's intriguing powers for unsettling the environment by simply being present. And I loved it.

As I was to understand later, recent international migrants coming from South Korea or China usually would not look for public schools in Bom Retiro as learning or socialisation places. They preferred to find others they considered co-nationals in spaces such as churches, cultural associations

¹⁹² Portuguese (I tried to maintain the Portuguese conveyed by Helen in the translation, even though it may not sound totally correct): My first Portuguese class. I am Korean (South Korea) married to Brazilian 6 years ago. ~~We lived in Japan 10 years ago.~~ But I never study Portuguese in schooling. Because I do not have time for study. When I arrived here, I did not understand conversation. All people speak too fast. I want go schooling for study Portuguese. But now I have daughter, cannot go schooling during the week. I saw poster this Portuguese class in Bom Retiro in front of Korean supermarket two weeks ago. My husband told: ~~he~~ I help you. I take you Portuguese class and play with baby during the class. Therefore, I ~~comply~~ complied Portuguese class. In the class everyone speaks Spanish, it not only myself. Teacher Simone spoke Portuguese during the class. I did not understand everything. I did not speak well, but this class is good for me. I like it. Class time was relocated earlier morning, but I want to comply this class.

or private schools. Thus, Helen's attendance at these Portuguese classes in a public school in Bom Retiro was certainly unusual. Even more surprising was learning that she came from another neighbourhood in the city, Butantã.

The Portuguese text above was a homework assignment from our first class. It was handwritten in blue ink, completed with the corrections that Helen had made. In the following class, when she was handing in this assignment, she enquired of me, *Você pode ajudar eu fazer exame Celpe-Bras?*¹⁹³

Celpe-Bras is the official test for assessing a foreigner's proficiency of Portuguese in Brazil. It was instituted by the Ministry of Education in 2010 and is the language certificate required to study in a Brazilian university or to apply for the naturalisation process in the country. As Helen had a specific goal of learning Portuguese and later had difficulties getting to the classes in Bom Retiro - on Sundays the subway line serving Butantã was frequently interrupted by construction work - I offered to teach her Portuguese at her home on the weekday of her choice.

On 14 May 2014, I headed to Helen's flat, in the west zone of São Paulo for the first time. She set the Portuguese lessons at 14:00, when her daughter usually took an afternoon nap. When I rang the bell, Helen welcomed me, murmuring, *Bebe dorme desde 13:30*¹⁹⁴, as an encoded message meaning that she was finally able to shift her attention away from her 18 month-old daughter and do something else. Helen's husband was not at home; he was working at the University of São Paulo, where he had a provisional postdoctoral position – the reason why Helen's family had moved to Brazil. We were on our own for the Portuguese class. In the living room, we began our lesson by checking how she was progressing in her practice of the Celpe-Bras exercises I had sent her earlier by email. *Eu escutar muitas vezes áudio, mas não entender, marido traduziu e eu procurar palavras em dicionário.*¹⁹⁵ From the audio, she had to write an answer in Portuguese to a given question. She did well despite reporting her great difficulty. At the end of the session, we found ourselves talking about our lives and routines. As language practice, our conversations were mostly in Portuguese, sometimes intermingled by sentences or words in English, Japanese or Korean. At her home, Helen usually spoke in Japanese with her husband and in Korean with her daughter. Through the routine of these Portuguese classes at Helen's home throughout the year, I was introduced to her life-course.

Helen was born in a small town in the southwest region of South Korea, where her parents still had a small plot of land for cultivating grapes, apples and rice. She was born in the 1970's and had a sister, six years older, and a brother, three years younger. About her childhood, she recalled, *Minha lado de casa, tem rio pequeno, eu, meu irmão gostamos, eh, nadar, é, nadar, pegar sapo. Porque irmão é homem... pega sapo, pega peixe... pequeno, desta tempo, tem muito, muitos peixes, tudo na-na, shizen... natural, muito bom.*¹⁹⁶ Wandering around with her brother when she was little, Helen did not

¹⁹³ Portuguese: Could you help I take Celpe-Bras test?

¹⁹⁴ Portuguese: Baby sleeping since 13:30.

¹⁹⁵ Portuguese: I listen audio many times, but not understand, husband translated and I look words in dictionary.

¹⁹⁶ Portuguese and Japanese: Beside my house, there's a stream, me, my brother, we like, uh, swim, yes, swim, catch toad. Because brother is male... catch toad, catch fish... small, that time, there was a lot, a lot of fish, everything na-na, nature... natural, very good.

observe gendered frontiers, experimenting with 'boyish' practices in her early years. Summer was harvest time for grapes, and winter was the time for pruning apple trees. The cut-off apple branches were usually incinerated under the floor of her parents' house, providing heating beneath their feet. The most cherished experiences in South Korea for her often carried a sort of sensory aspect and were related to this place of origin, to which she frequently returned to visit her parents. This was the result of an assignment she delivered on 2 April 2014 when I requested that the students write a few lines after reading a poem in Portuguese about longing for home:

Minha terra é cheia de cheiro das uvas.

No verao, coletamos montanhas destas.

Minha terra tem o som de água do rio que corre.

Têm os sons de animais que cantam.

Minha terra tem as faces de pessoas que amo.

Meu pai, minha mãe, irmãos, amigos.

Minha terra é o lugar onde descanso o coração.¹⁹⁷

In this poetic piece of writing, all five senses - sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell - are evoked in order to offer a tangible perception of Helen's homeland. Besides the beloved sentiments towards her family and her hometown, growing up made her hometown seem small and monotonous, as she described in a written lesson on 23 July 2014:

Quando eu era pequena, eu morava uma cidade pequena. No campo, eu ansiava por coisas novas. Eu gostei de a língua inglês, quando a escola secundária. Eu escutava musica popular americana todos os dias. Eu acho que tinha interesse por as coisas estrangeiro.¹⁹⁸

After finishing secondary school, still longing for new things, she moved to the city of Busan in order to study for a degree in higher education. As has already been explained in another section, she had expected to study English; however, she did not achieve the required score to do so and

¹⁹⁷ Portuguese(I tried to maintain the Portuguese conveyed by Helen in the translation, even though it may not sound totally correct):

My homeland is full with the smell of grapes
In the summer, we reep mountains of them.

My homeland has the sound of water from the flowing stream.
It is full of sounds from the singing animals.

My homeland has the faces of the people I love
Dad, mom, siblings, friends.
My homeland is where my heart rests.

¹⁹⁸ Portuguese: When I was little, I lived a small town. In the countryside, I longed for new things. I liked English language when secondary school. I listened to American popular music everyday. I believe I had interest in foreign things.

therefore opted for Japanese. Though she was not content to stay in the small town, she would not find satisfaction living in larger cities either. After earning her degree in Japanese, she decided to go to Seoul – where her sister was living - in order to find work. Her experience gave rise to an uneasy account.

Helen found an opportunity to organise a course book on Japanese for secondary school students at a publishing company. Her life in Seoul, thereafter, became excessively busy, *Vida? Ahhh... Tudo dias, todos dias trabalha muito, ele, o livro tem que, ah, livro tem que provar, professora ver... Por isso, tem deadline... aahh... Eu, todos domingos, eu editora. Eu editora, tem outra professora de japonês. É, três. Todos dias eu encontrei professora, eh, pensar como melhorar livro...*¹⁹⁹ Although she worked exhaustingly, she found her wage too low, considering the cost of living in Seoul. *Ah, Seul mensalidade é alto, e salary, muito baixa, trabalha muito... Eu pensei ... estudar mais ou trabalhar outra... minha amiga suggest... sugeriu... uma prova... de estudante... de prefeitura no Japão. Eu estudar, estudei... e prova e... passou.*²⁰⁰ Seoul did not offer Helen comfort, and over the years, a sense of estrangement in regards to South Korea consolidated in her.

On 23 July 2014, she wrote the following in one of her Portuguese lessons:

Eu morei no Japão 11 anos. Durante 11 anos. O sistema da Coréia mudou muito. O sistema de como usar ônibus, fazer compras no mercado, usar o banco, etc. Apesar de ser coreana, eu não conheço este novo sistema.²⁰¹

In Chapter 1, I mentioned the importance of Japan in Helen's life, particularly because she met her husband in the small Japanese town in which she had applied to teach Korean to city council officials. Not only had the rapid economic and technological transformations that South Korea went through during Helen's life-journey provided her with the distress born of precarious conditions of work and the nuisance of not being familiar anymore with 'systems' to lead her daily routine, but incidents within her family were also given as evidence of her frequent unconscious displays of inappropriateness in being Korean. Marrying a non-Korean was the clearest example in this direction. As revealed earlier, Helen confronted her father's expectations in choosing to marry someone who had been born in Brazil. In addition to her husband being a non-Korean, he was four years younger than her, *Like young brother*, Helen stated on 14 May 2014. In South Korea, women were supposed to marry older men outside their families, whom they would call 'oppa'. Her husband was considered 'hyung', little brother - because in South Korea many people still relied on a sort of gendered and generational stratification commonly used to address each other along supposed levels of authority and respect. Marrying a 'hyung' was not considered a very prestigious accomplishment.

¹⁹⁹ Portuguese: Life? Ahhh... all days, everyday work too much, it, the book has, ah, it has to be tested, teacher should look... Because of deadline... aahh... I, every Sunday, I publishing company. I publishing company, with another teacher of Japanese. They, three. Everyday I met a teacher, eh, think how to improve the coursebook...

²⁰⁰ Portuguese: Ah, Seoul, expenses too high, and salary, too low, work too hard... I thought... study more or work in another... my friend suggest, suggested... a test... for students... from a Japanese city council. I study, studied... and test... passed.

²⁰¹ Portuguese: I lived in Japan 11 years. During 11 years. Korean system has changed a lot. The system applied to public buses, supermarkets, banks, etc. Besides being Korean, I was not used to this system.

Helen disturbed not only fundamental assumptions within her nuclear family, she also unsettled relationships within her extended family. On 11 July 2014 she commented that during one specific holiday, Chuseok, she joined her parents at her father's elder brother's party. Unexpectedly, her cousin asked straightaway why she had come to his father's house. She was appalled by the direct question and could not reply to her cousin straightaway. Only later did she realise that her cousin was referring to the convention in which married women should attend only her husband's family gatherings. An *outro way of thinking*²⁰², Helen emphasised to me.

Helen's 'way of thinking' will be scrutinised further below. For now, it is also important to be cognisant of the fact that she did not feel at ease with Korean families domiciled in São Paulo either. On 16 June 2014, she said that she and her husband were invited to a party by a Korean family living in Aclimação, south zone of the city. Helen and her husband had the impression that many people at the event, mostly born in South Korea, looked at them resentfully as they communicated with each other in Japanese. At the same time, she did not feel encouraged to speak in Korean during the party, as everyone was chatting in Portuguese. Helen frowned and explained, *Era como tinha parede entre gente*.²⁰³

Helen's experiences meant that she did not regard the country of her birth as the most desired place to work and, simultaneously, she failed to fulfil many of the expectations about being a Korean woman in a variety of situations. Korean-ness was not the only defining aspect of her person: she repeatedly observed that she was partly Japanese after living eleven years in Japan, following her husband during his Master's and doctoral studies and continuing to teach Korean to Japanese officials.

On 25 June 2014, Helen described how she felt a bit Japanese in the way she behaved, *Aahh, agora... minha família ou amigas falou eu mais japonês, eu gosto de japonês*.²⁰⁴ She did not enjoy situations in which many people talked at the same time. She would remain silent, similar to the Japanese people she had met who were inclined to be quieter and reticent. In her Portuguese exercise of 23 July 2014, she added another example:

Eu estou acostumada com os hábitos e costumes da sociedade japonesa. Por exemplo, quando vou subir no metrô, com a regra eu espero até todas as pessoas descem primeiro para eu poder entrar, o que é um comportamento tipicamente japonês. Mas quando outras pessoas não seguem esta regra, eu fico sem saber o quê fazer.²⁰⁵

Although Helen acknowledged in herself characteristics she identified as being Japanese, she was aware that she was not Japanese. Neither embracing Korean-ness nor Japanese-ness as exclusive defining attributes of herself, Helen gained a position in which she was able to be open to both qualities; at the same time, she could be critical of them as well.

²⁰² Portuguese and English: Another way of thinking.

²⁰³ Portuguese: It was like there was wall between people.

²⁰⁴ Portuguese: Aaahh, now... my family or friends told I more Japanese, I like Japanese people.

²⁰⁵ Portuguese: I am used to Japanese customs and habits. For instance, when I get in a subway coach, as a rule, I wait people get off first so I can get in, which it is a very common Japanese demeanour. But when other people do not follow this rule, I end up not knowing what to do.

As someone who appreciated quieter behaviour, Helen referred disapprovingly to many Koreans as being too ‘barulhentos’²⁰⁶ compared to most Japanese. On the other hand, in our conversation on 14 May 2014, Koreans could be considered excessively talkative, but usually were also more direct: *Mas tudo em coreano... quando encontra uma pessoa, fala... fala, fala... eh... ah... fala...English... to meet other person or people, always speak himself or herself... In Korea, people usually speak themselves. Eu também. Meu nome é Helen, eu moro huumm, eu gosto huuumm. Coreano, mais fácil... mais fácil to be friends.*²⁰⁷ And in her consideration of Japanese people: *No Japão, no Japão é diferente, é difícil. Quando eu... drink a... toma, beber de ál... Álcool, com amigo, amiga japonês... mesmo? É, mesmo... estudante, mesmo professora, eh... três ou quatro... eh, beber muito, né. Beber muito, aahh, nós amigos. Outra dia, outra dia... eh, quando encontra na manhã, de manhã: Ah, ohayo. Japonês, ohayo. Nós não amigos.*²⁰⁸

This oppositional way of defining Korean-ness and Japanese-ness was restated in our conversation on 7 November 2014, when I mentioned I was to travel to South Korea in December with the students from the Korean classes I attended in Bom Retiro. Helen asked me about our travel itinerary and I could only say that the opportunity was publicised some weeks before with suggestions that the travel would include visits to cultural highlights, universities and industrial plants. Helen frowned, giving a sceptic look: *Coreano muito desorganizado, não planeja muito.*²⁰⁹ In Japan, a trip like this would never happen, *Quando eu trabalhar... japonês muito detalha, tem uma projeto, você tem uma projeto, eles... uma ano...um ano, tem projeto, este ano, ele faz...começa... comecei... um ano antes, aahh, japonês muito detalhado... tem meeting, meeting muitas vezes.*²¹⁰ But in further discussing this Japanese quality, she pondered: *É boa, bom aspecto.... pensando, pensa mais detalha, detalha... mas este bom aspecto se torna... não precisa de pensar muito, mas... pensar muito.*²¹¹

This critical and unsettling outlook both on ways of being Korean and being Japanese created an inconsistent and conflicting position for Helen. In assuming herself to be Korean and Japanese all at once, she held in herself two divergent characteristics. Simultaneously, in criticising both ethnic references, she also extricated herself from them. Thus, Helen moved in a kaleidoscopic state of being and non-being Korean and/or Japanese with all its possible concatenations, continuously expressing her unfitness for either, both, and neither of them.

Differently put, Brazilian-ness was not yet an attribute Helen recognised in herself, as, according to her notion of ‘ways of thinking’, delineated below, she had been living in Brazil for a very short period (since November 2013). Brazilian-ness, up to that point when I was conducting fieldwork,

²⁰⁶ Portuguese: loud or noisy.

²⁰⁷ Portuguese and English: But all Korean... when meet someone, talk... talk, talk... eh... ah... talk... English... to meet other person or people, always speak himself or herself... In Korea, people usually speak themselves. Me too. My name is Helen, I live in huumm, I like huuumm. Koreans, easier... easier to be friends.

²⁰⁸ Portuguese, English and Japanese: In Japan, in Japan is different. It’s difficult. When I... drink a... drink al... alcohol with Japanese male friend, female friend... the same? Same... student, or teacher, uh... three or four... uh, drink too much. Drink too much, aahh, we friends. Next day, next day... uh, when meet in the morning – Ah, good morning. Japanese, good morning. We not friends.

²⁰⁹ Portuguese: Koreans too disorganised, they don’t plan much.

²¹⁰ Portuguese and English: When I work, Japanese detail too much, a project, you have a project, they... one year... one year, the project this year, it start, started... one year before, aahhh, Japanese, too many details, have meetings, meetings too many times.

²¹¹ Portuguese: It’s good, good aspect... thinking, to think more detail, detail... but this good aspect becomes ... you don’t need to think too much, but... think too much.

pervaded her life only through the relationship with her husband and a few experiences in the city of São Paulo.

For her, Brazilian-ness was not a defining aspect of her husband's character, but certainly it was part of his uncommon trajectory. As his parents were staff of the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he spent his early life in Canada and Australia, returning to Brazil to reside in Brasília during his adolescence. In his first year at the University of Brasília, he left again for Japan where he completed his Bachelor's degree in Physics and earned his Master's and doctoral diplomas in Chemistry. Because her husband had lived in Brazil only for around one third of his entire life, Helen believed he was not completely Brazilian, as she remarked on 11 July 2014: *Ele brasileiro, mas um brasileiro diferente*²¹². She would say this moving her right hand forward from her chest and making a curve to the right, adding, *Assim como eu ser uma coreana diferente*²¹³.

Her husband was regarded as being a different Brazilian, but concerning her father-in-law, Helen commented on 18 September 2014: *Meu sogro é muito brasileiro*²¹⁴. She illustrated this statement by telling me episodes involving unpleasant incidents with her father-in-law. Both of them took place when Helen and her husband were living in Tokyo and her father-in-law had recently taken up a position in the Brazilian embassy in Japan. In the first episode, Helen and her husband had arranged lunch with her husband's father, but he arrived 30 minutes late, apologising and explaining that he had got stuck in a traffic jam. Helen mentioned she was not convinced by this, as it was Sunday. Later she understood that her father-in-law would, as a rule, always be non-punctual. On another occasion, when her husband was very busy with his PhD thesis, her father-in-law asked her husband to buy vitamins for his dog's nails, without noticing that his son was wrapped up with multiple lab experiments. Helen credited her father-in-law's lack of thoughtfulness as his way of being Brazilian.

A sense of Brazilian-ness was also evoked by Helen when undergoing experiences which she believed were not possible in any other part of the world. On 23 July 2014, when I was helping her to bake a banana cake in her kitchen, she told me that ever since they had moved to that apartment, one of the bedroom's floors had needed replacing, but they had been negotiating with the landlord and the real estate agency for six months and could not reach an agreement. She told me the owner had asked them to provide two estimates for the service, which they promptly did. However, the landlord decided to ignore their quotes and chose a different company to make another estimated budget and set a date for the company's visit. Helen waited the whole day for the company's employees, but they had never showed up. Helen became irritated. She was surprised when she phoned both the real estate agency and her landlord and they did not show concern about her lost time and the unresolved problem. She was appalled at how services in Brazil were so stress-inducing and slow, asserting: *Eu aprender Português pra poder falar seguro nessas situações*.²¹⁵

Another disturbing incident involving a certain sense of Brazilian-ness in Helen's considerations came from her Portuguese homework on 17 March 2014, when she reported:

²¹² Portuguese: He Brazilian, but a different Brazilian.

²¹³ Portuguese: The same way I'm a different Korean.

²¹⁴ Portuguese: My father-in-law is too Brazilian.

²¹⁵ Portuguese: I to learn Portuguese so I can speak confidently in these situations.

Hoje eu acordei seis horas da manhã. Tomei banho e escovei os dentes e tomei o café da manhã.

Eu saí de casa 8 horas da manhã. Hoje, minha bebê tinha um exame médico no hospital universidade.

Meu marido reservou um exame médico pra ela três meses passados. Nós chegamos no HU 9 horas.

Meu marido foi pra confirmar a reserva, mas a reserva mudou porque o médico teve uma conferencia esta semana.

Nós não sabemos. Ele não deu informar. Não deu uma carta nem enviou e-mail.

A funcionária falou ela mandou uma carta e telefonou para meu marido. Mas a carta não chegou e meu marido não recebeu telefonema.

Eu estava zangada com eles.²¹⁶

Despite this inconvenient incident, Helen recognised during our conversation on 7 November 2014 that doctors and nurses in Brazil were friendlier than in Japan or South Korea -- where medical units were better equipped with the latest apparatuses. Similar to her musings on Korean-ness and Japanese-ness, Helen imputed both positive and negative aspects as she articulated a certain Brazilian specificity to events she had experienced while living in São Paulo.

The positive aspect of Brazilian-ness frequently mentioned by Helen was widespread affability that she identified in different occasions in São Paulo. In her lesson of 19 February 2014, she wrote:

Eu encontrei o senhor morar no primeiro andar. O nome dele é José Maria. Ele sempre feliz. Ele gosta de cuidar de plantas. Ele falou várias coisas pra mim, mas eu não entendi tudo. Eu quero conversar com ele fluentemente.²¹⁷

And on 21 February 2014:

Eu acordei cedo. Fui comprar os peixes na feira. Na feira tem comidas e bebidas. Pastel, caldo de cana. Meu marido gosta de beber caldo de cana. Nós sempre bebemos caldo de cana lá. O dono da barraca é bondoso, dá mais caldo de cana sempre.²¹⁸

²¹⁶ Portuguese: Today I woke up at six in the morning. I took a shower and brushed my teeth e had breakfast. I left home 8 in the morning. Today my baby had a medical appointment at the university hospital. My husband booked a medical appointment for her three past months. We arrived at HU 9 o'clock. My husband asked for confirmation of the booking, but the appointment had been relocated because the doctor had a conference this week. We do not know. He did not provide to inform. He did not send letter or email. The attendant said she sent letter and phoned to my husband. But the letter did not arrive and my husband did not receive phone call. I was mad at them.

²¹⁷ Portuguese: I met gentleman lives on the first floor. His name is José Maria. He always happy. He enjoys growing plants. He told me many things, but I did not understand everything. I want to speak with him fluently.

²¹⁸ Portuguese: Today I woke up early. I went to buy fish in the open market. In the open market, there are food and beverage. Pastel, sugarcane juice. My husband likes to drink sugarcane juice. We always drink sugarcane juice there. The stall's owner is kind, he always gives more juice.

However, again, Helen remarked on 25 June 2014, *Em Brazil, as pessoas são muito calorosas, mas elas não ficam amigas de verdade.*²¹⁹

In attempting to explain herself and her life to me in terms of national-cum-ethnic categorizations of behaving and acting, Helen's accounts held this oscillating movement between a critical outlook and an appreciative stance, making her position appear to be at times incongruous or incompatible, as she was herself never to be part of any classification completely or fit it properly. Together with this expression of uneasiness regarding national-cum-ethnic belonging, Helen had her own notions to cope with the events of her life-journey beyond the 'mosaic' sense of national-cum-ethnic categorization.

As mentioned above, the idea of 'ways of thinking' is central for Helen's making sense of her trajectory. The first time she used this expression, she enunciated it in English. Later, she asked me for its translation in Portuguese, employing both forms to explain the expression's meaning. As it has been revealed above, Helen believed she was a 'different Korean' and had a different 'way of thinking' compared, for instance, to her family members. On 25 June 2014, she introduced the expression 'ways of thinking' by applying it to her own nuclear family, *Marido, ele também tem outro way of thinking... jeito de pensar, quando conheci ele, jeito de pensar diferente, mais brasileiro. Agora, eu e ele mais similar. No Brasil, a gente mais similar. Eu morar aqui mais longo, eu pode mudar. Mas agora não, por enquanto não.*²²⁰ This plastic aspect of someone's way of thinking was strikingly described when she referred to how she presumed her daughter's way of thinking was to be, *Aahh, bebê... acho que... o maior importante, o maior é lugares, ou país, qual país ela... cresce ou ela mora. É primeiro. Eu também preocupado quando ela... em cresce... quinze ou dezesseis anos... eu pode não ser, mas eu não conseguiu, conseguir comunicar... com ela... way of thinking... ela diferente... ela pode...ela pega meu... jeito de pensar, mas ela... cria, construi outro.*²²¹

According to Helen, a way of thinking was very personally shaped by the situations and experiences one encountered. And for her, the place one lived was especially significant in defining it. Helen had lived in different places: her hometown, Busan, Seoul, the small Japanese town, Tokyo and finally São Paulo. So, she developed a different way of thinking when compared to her husband, who had lived in Canada, Australia, Brasília, the small Japanese town where he met Helen, Tokyo and São Paulo. Their daughter was conceived in Tokyo, was born in Seoul and, after living some time in Tokyo again, moved to São Paulo. It follows, then, that a way of thinking could not be inherited or transmitted, and so all three of them developed different ways of thinking. People were able to come into similar ways of thinking by being involved in the same circumstances together -- as Helen recognised that she and her husband were developing more convergent ways of thinking by living in São Paulo at that moment. Yet, each person would have their own way of thinking to the point that

²¹⁹ Portuguese: In Brazil, people are warm, but they can't be truly your friend.

²²⁰ Portuguese and English: Husband, he has another way of thinking... way of thinking, when I met him, different way of thinking, more Brazilian. Now, I and he more similar. In Brazil, we more similar. I live here more, I can change. But for now not, for the time being not.

²²¹ Portuguese and English: Aahh, baby... I believe... the most important... is places or country, which country she... is raised or lives. Firstly. I am worried too about when she... grows up... fifteen or sixteen years old... I cannot, cannot communicate... with her... way of thinking... she different... she can have my... way of thinking, but she... creates, builds another.

Helen feared she might not understand her own daughter, depending on the country where they would be living in the future. Their long-term family plans were still unclear, as her husband was to complete his postdoctoral research at the University of São Paulo in 2016 and had not been successful in getting a permanent post in Brazil so far. Hence, he was also aiming to apply for other academic opportunities abroad.

The openness embedded in Helen's notion of 'ways of thinking' was visibly fused with a sense that encompassed life's uncertainties. In a previous section, I pointed out how Helen did not see distinctions between 'choice' and 'fate' in life. Nevertheless, on 25 June 2014, she emphasised that, when she deliberately decided to go to Japan, she did not plan too much. She only wanted to be away from excessive and underpaid work like the job that she had had in the publishing company in Seoul: *Eu não esperava sentir japonesa*²²², she admitted. Actually, at the beginning, it was not easy for her to live in Japan. She frankly felt she was a foreigner there, as no one was very friendly. But, with time, she found affectionate friends in Japan.

From all of this, we can see that Helen's way of thinking was in continuous transformation, incorporating the unexpected events of her life-course, making her life an ever experimental endeavour without fixed standards of what could or should happen.

This process of change following Helen's life-course also enabled a sort of growth of her being-in-movement. On 11 July 2014, I proposed a homework question to elicit a written response in Portuguese: Quando uma pessoa sai de seu país de origem ela perde alguma coisa? O quê? Explique. Essa pessoa ganha alguma coisa no novo país?²²³ Helen read the question slowly and aloud, making sure she understood it, and commented, *Se perde, mas também se ganha*²²⁴, uniting her palms open laterally in front her face, then moving them forward and expanding the space between her hands, making a gesture of widening her sight. The following week, she handed in the text below:

A pessoa ganha outro jeito de pensar. Ela consegue pensar sobre as coisas de duas maneiras diferentes. Portanto ela se torna uma pessoa mais sábia.

Eu acho que nada se perde. Contudo, perde-se a oportunidade de passar tempo com amigos e família.

Eu acho que não perdi nada. Agora eu estou tendo a oportunidade de morar em um país com costumes diferentes do meu. A estrutura social é diferente.²²⁵

Differently from Julieta, who declared she was 'losing her Bolivian roots', Helen did not feel she had lost anything by living in many countries and by altering her way of thinking. On the contrary, Helen experienced an enlargement of her self. However, this process was not free from consequences.

²²² Portuguese: I did not expect to feel Japanese.

²²³ Portuguese: When someone leaves one's own country of origin, does one lose anything? What? Explain. Does one gain anything in the new country?

²²⁴ Portuguese: One loses, but also gains.

²²⁵ Portuguese: One acquires another way of thinking. The person can think about everything in two different ways. Therefore, one becomes a wiser person. I believe nothing is lost. However, the opportunity to spend time with friends and family is lost. I do not believe I lost anything. Now I am having the opportunity to live in a country with different customs. The social structure is different.

In being a 'different Korean', misunderstanding certain social rules in South Korea, marrying a non-Korean husband and living in different countries, Helen had to live away from precious friends and family members – parents and siblings – as one day her father reluctantly professed. This was the price of taking an open journey whose end she was unable to envisage.

The life-journeys of Liu and Helen carried this intrinsic quality of not fitting expectations of many sorts. National or ethnic references were disturbed by the particular way each of them progressed in their life-courses. Liu refused to be limited by her Chinese citizenship, while Helen upset assumptions of being an honourable Korean woman.

Because Liu and Helen did not restrain themselves to bounded assumptions of nationality and/or gender, these same references were lived by them in multiplicity and contradiction. Liu did not find satisfaction in being Chinese. She had been turned down the opportunity to become American, and was trying to be considered Brazilian in order to get to the United Kingdom. Differently, Helen did not despise being Korean. She felt she was partly Korean, as she was partly Japanese, and possibly could become partly Brazilian. She had mixed feelings about each of these references of nationality. Not feeling attached to such categorisations of nationality expressed a displacement proper to an ironic attitude (Rapport 1997a), in which there is a certain consciousness that every value is not absolute and it may be subject to re-assessment. This shifting process imparted a great degree of multiplicity and inconsistency –and potentiality or openness— to the lives of Liu and Helen.

Similar to Julieta and Mr. Soh, the life-journeys of Liu and Helen were characterised by a certain profusion of experiences, but this abundance was not prompted by being pulled by different strings of national-cum-ethnic categorizations. Quite the reverse, the excessiveness in Liu's and Helen's lives was generated by their exploration fuelled by not fitting these sorts of categories and ironically and intentionally 'going beyond' them. They practised and embodied a 'human' potentiality, as outlined by Rapport:

'[T]o go beyond present circumstances of being, their lineaments and seeming limits; to go beyond the categorical features of symbolic classifications – the boundaries between things and relations – that human beings at the same time invent so adeptly and defend so vehemently' (Rapport 2010:3).

The parameters of national-cum-ethnic categorisations were not able to express the extent of Liu and Helen's existences. These categorisations were repeatedly made incongruous and contradictory throughout their personal life- trajectories.

The puzzlement involved in this excessiveness as it pours out in the life-journeys of Liu and Helen is the richness that a poetics of resonance attempted to amplify. In Liu's case, multiplicity was elicited by ellipsis and ambiguity: the opening piece was inspired by her concealment of some of the experiences she had in the United States, unfolding the necessary respect to not restrict her life to this occurrence, though it determined future consequences for her and her nuclear family. In the closing piece of poetics of resonance in Liu's section, what was brought to attention was the tricky indeterminacy between Liu's spontaneous desire of having a second child and the utilitarian purpose of giving birth in order to gain Brazilian citizenship. In another fashion, Helen's plurality was evoked in a kaleidoscopic style, gathering the many aspects of her life-journey involved in the choice of getting married to a non-Korean and following him around the world to constitute her 'family'.

This over-spilling or excessive characteristic in the life-courses of Liu and Helen significantly contributed to producing a sense of open-ness towards others and the world, in which unexpected and experimental practices were able to take place beyond the restricted vocabulary of nationality-cum-ethnicity terms. Wardle (2007) explains this open-ness in the context of West Indian religiosity as an inter-subjective process called 'ambiguation', referring to the negotiations of meanings necessary to bridge a person's narrative of experience and her or his perception of the world. This open-ness in Liu's and Helen's life-journeys was rendered as a capability to conceive of other parameters through which to reason about their particular trajectories. In their unique personal journeys to understand themselves, and to live a life beyond the categories with which they did not feel comfortable, each developed an alternative understanding of the drives leading their respective lives. Liu believed in the right to the 'good life' and Helen devised the notion of 'ways of thinking'.

Although 'right' and 'citizenship' acquired an excessive utilitarian and self-interested meaning in Liu's striving after the possibilities and paperwork of immigration rules and regulations, 'good life' was the major concept that sustained all her efforts to achieve what she believed was a reasonable and fair standard of living for her family. She did not regard the country where she was born as being able to offer this. China could not provide the necessary freedom or the desirable material conditions, while Brazil offered certain freedom – such as the possibility of giving birth to a second child without many difficulties – but could not make available a good standard of living based on decent public services. In Liu's view, a 'good life' was unevenly distributed around different nation-states in the world, and she was convinced that she was entitled to achieve what was 'good' for her family, wherever it was available and by whatever means possible. A 'good life' was the driving force animating Liu's life-journey.

Dissimilarly, Helen's notion of 'ways of thinking' was a rationalisation of how people develop different ways of regarding life, based on the particular situations and experiences a person goes through. In this view, no one was able to transmit a way of thinking to another person. Each way of thinking was unique for the mere reason that it was impossible for anyone to have exactly the same experiences as another. In this way, Helen was afraid of not understanding her own daughter in the future, because her daughter would develop a totally different 'way of thinking', as Helen supposed she would be growing up in a different setting with different experiences. Correspondingly, Helen considered that her husband had a different 'way of thinking' as well. Even though he was born in Brazil, this was not enough to make him completely Brazilian, as he had varied experiences in different parts of the world. At the same time, a way of thinking for Helen was changeable throughout someone's life-course, and their particular ways of thinking could thus be more similar or dissimilar in different periods of coexistence.

Both ideas of the 'good life' and of a 'way of thinking' were self-authored personal considerations that enabled Liu and Helen to overcome the uneasiness of not properly suiting the categories each of them were supposed to fit within. Each idea offered an open-ness to becoming something else in their own terms: in order to 'go beyond' categorizations of nationality-cum-ethnicity, Liu and Helen developed capacities for creating alternative foundations to lead their lives. In this way, their life-journeys can be considered their 'life-projects', as defined by Rapport (2003):

While not necessarily unified or rectilinear, singular in essence or unchanging, and while possibly coming into clear focus only gradually (even slipping in and out of focus), a life-project is a kind of self-theorizing and self-intensity that affords an individual life a directionality and a force (Rapport 2003:34).

The circumstances of going beyond certain conventions and generating a life-project are open experiments that require intense reflexivity and creativity. Reflexivity to question conventional values and to reposition oneself before them. Creativity to make novel ways to live and be in the world. In this regard, the only way one possesses to be truthful to one's own process of going beyond conventional beliefs is by creating meaning, and in doing so, unfolding the possibility of living in one's own terms.

However, this process of creation is not easy or clear. In their search for 'good life', Liu and her husband had their plans interrupted in the United States for reasons that were not disclosed to me. Their life-journeys were rearranged, and Brazil then became an option to facilitate their access to the good life in the United Kingdom. In Helen's case, the open-ness of 'ways of thinking' led her and her husband to go to Brazil. Her husband had a temporary post-doctoral research position in the University of São Paulo and they were living under the uncertainty of what would happen next. Her husband was applying for job opportunities in Europe, Japan and Brazil, and Helen's family's near future was still pending at the time I finished my fieldwork period. Thus, contingency and chance affected these life-journeys.

Moreover, because both Liu and Helen deliberately chose to conduct their lives with reference to their own respective notions of 'good life' and 'ways of thinking', living geographically away from their wider familial groups, they lamented being distant from close familial bonds with parents, siblings and/or members of their extended family. In other words, the quest to fulfil these life-projects was not free from apprehension, resentment and longing. Being unattached to circumscribed categories of belonging made these life-journeys full of uncertainties and uneasiness.

Nevertheless, it also granted space for experimentation, making life visibly open-ended. In this process of life-experimentation, Liu's and Helen's life-journeys also brought to light the varying degrees and realms in which each of them enacted a sort of enlargement of their presences. Liu operated within the logics of documents and nation-state administrative procedures in order to add Brazilian citizenship to her Chinese nationality. On her part, Helen incorporated within herself languages, habits and anecdotes from places and people she lived through, feeling she was partly Korean, partly Japanese, and perhaps partly Brazilian if she stayed longer in the country.

This enlargement of the self that lived throughout these particular life-journeys is deemed here an 'immensity': 'a transcendental inventiveness free from normative and ideological constraints, a potentially limitless, expansion of being', as Rapport (2003:42) describes it. In incorporating Brazilian citizenship with her failed attempt to live the American dream and her Chinese nationality, Liu defined herself beyond these national affiliations, allowing herself to reconfigure her being according to the terms of the good life she was searching for. She was not Chinese, or unsuccessful American nor aspiring Brazilian, she was something other than these denominations might express. The same can be said about Helen: she could be partly Korean, partly Japanese, and potentially partly Brazilian, but her uneasiness in incorporating these same labels located her as someone better understood by the unique experiences she had been through in different places and with different people. The immensity of Liu's and Helen's lives, thus, is not just an accumulation of diverse memberships that stands side by side and can be activated separately depending on the occasion or the time in which is required to be enacted. Their immensity is not a collection of different identities: it resides in the awareness that the categories of nationality are not sufficient to give expression to what they were, are and will be. Their immensity is everything that they were and are but also the potentialities for inventing new ways of existing and living in their futures.

PART III

CHAPTER 6

LIFE-JOURNEYS AND MIGRATION STUDIES

The life-journeys portrayed in the previous chapters are evidence of the richness embedded in a person's existence: these trajectories show how singular each life-course becomes in its own unfolding. Some of the research participants relied considerably on notions of ethnicity and nationality, while others generated alternative explanations. For all of them, holding an understanding of the world allowed them to position themselves in the world and make plans for the future.

In this third part of the thesis, I discuss some consequences for migration and urban studies that have been derived from the phenomenological approach undertaken. In this chapter, I analyse debates within migration studies, pursuing questions that the life-journeys of Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta, Mr. Soh, Liu and Helen have raised.

6.1 DISTURBING CATEGORIES

A debate in migration studies that is visibly addressed by the approach chosen in this ethnographic account comprises the heuristic value of some of these studies to question key concepts in the human sciences, such as identity, nation, state or culture. In considering mobility and movement as a new fundamental 'measure', migrants and globalization - as expressions of these phenomena - became the pioneering components of new ways of knowing in the humanities (Clifford 1997, Appadurai 1996, Robertson et al. 1994).

Marcus (1995) assessed that 'world-system' based approaches would progressively ingrain anthropological ways of producing knowledge. He posited that not only would multi-sited ethnographies have to pay attention to the attachments between the 'global' and the 'local', but single-sited ethnographies would also have to modify underlying principles, such as cultural boundedness and fieldwork immersion. He forecasted that this process would also mean the inevitability of interdisciplinary interactions between anthropology and media studies, technology studies, or feminist studies in order to re-locate the significance of concepts such as culture, society and power.

Rapport and Dawson called attention to the notion of 'home' as a means to transcend traditional classifications of identity based on fixities of place and time, exploring instead the fluidities and multiplicities inherent in contemporary identities of a 'world of movement'. Thus, 'for a world of travellers, of labour migrants, exiles and commuters, home comes to be found in a routine set of practices, a repetition of habitual interactions, in styles of dress and address, in memories and myths, in stories carried around in one's head' (Rapport and Dawson 1994:7).

In a similar vein, Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc (1994) examined how the 'multi-stranded social relations' of immigrants challenged the conventional understanding of nation-states defined in terms of a people sharing a common culture within a bounded territory. Defining this process of building a multiplicity of involvements across different nation-states as 'transnationalism', the authors proposed understanding migrants as citizens who 'live physically dispersed within the boundaries of many other states, but who remain socially, politically, culturally and often economically part of the nation-state of their ancestors' (Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc 1994: 8).

In a more extreme fashion, the approach developed in this thesis urges further questioning of conventional categorisations commonly in use in migration studies. In attempting to take into account the irreducibility of any research subject to social or cultural categories by privileging the singularity of each person's life-journey, this thesis provides a glimpse of migrant lives beyond classifications of nationality, ethnicity, gender, or citizenship. It is my hope that this ethnography might offer brief insights into Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta, Mr. Soh, Liu and Helen as presences in the fullness of their complexity and mystery. In this way, perhaps the category of migrant could be overcome in favour of appreciating these lives not as objectified generalisations but as particular dramas in the struggle to exist in the world.

Unsurprisingly, Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta, Mr. Soh, Liu and Helen also operated with notions which the human sciences generally identify as nationality, ethnicity, gender, kinship, or citizenship. However, to encapsulate each of them under these terms would be to subdue the many complexities and potentialities depicted in the previous chapters. Although M. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta and Mr. Soh clearly asserted in very personal ways their respective sense of belonging to a certain nationality, following their life-journeys demonstrated how the events of their own trajectories questioned these senses of belonging. Their life-courses constantly overflowed these attempts to secure the understanding of being under categories of nationality-cum-ethnicity. Concomitantly, if the design of this research had been based only on categories such as nationality, ethnicity, or citizenship, Liu and Helen's life-journeys might not have been perceived in their own terms. Or else, Liu and Helen's lives might have been excluded from the investigation because they would be considered too 'extravagant' to compose a coherent account.

Thus, richness and complexity becomes another fundamental topic to be discussed.

6.2 COMPLEXITY AT PLAY

Richness, thickness and density were designations used in previous chapters to express a sense of complexity in the life-journeys of this account. Attempting to establish a dialogue within migration studies, I focus on complexity as key term for this section.

The complexity conveyed by people's life-journeys in this account holds a different significance to other well-known notions of complexity. In migration studies, the problem of complexity has been raised mostly in the debate concerning the 'global' and its effects.

For instance, Hannerz chose the expression 'global ecumene' 'to allude to the interconnectedness of the world, by way of interactions, exchanges and related developments' (1996:7). In this framework, complexity referred to the intricacy of cultural flows involved in the organisation and re-organisation of meanings in movement, which opened possibilities to processes of juxtaposition and creolisation (Hannerz 1992). In a way, Hannerz's idea of 'cultural complexity' sustained the Geertzian understanding of culture as a 'web of meanings' (Geertz 1973), comprising a multiplicity of complex structures of signification, though transposed to the context of a global era.

While meaning and culture are key notions supporting Hannerz's conception of complexity, Eriksen (2007) and Vertovec (2010) discussed complexity based on the relation between migrants and states. The former focused on debates concerning 'integration' and, the latter, on issues of 'multiculturalism'. In the pluralistic societies of the contemporary world, Eriksen was convinced that

in order to tackle the 'substantial issues of ethnic and cultural complexity', it was necessary to explore the 'criteria of exclusion and inclusion in a given social environment' (2007:1060). For him, the problem of defining these criteria through notions of majority and minority would be made more precise by reclaiming Tönnies's concepts of *Gesellschaft* (society) and *Gemeinschaft* (community). In doing this, the complexity of integration could be discussed in terms of class and culture, within a range between open-ness and closed-ness that could accommodate diverse processes of hybridity and fragmentation as well. In a similar vein, Vertovec identified that the concept of ethnicity was not enough to give account of the presence of migrants in multi-ethnic arenas. Together, other dimensions such as 'entitlements and restrictions of rights, divergent labour market experiences, discrete gender and age profiles, patterns of spatial distribution, and mixed local area responses by service providers and residents' (2010:67) influenced migrants' statuses and, thus, a multidimensional analysis was required. Vertovec proposed to recognise this complexity by using the notion of 'super-diversity' as a means to encompass the diverse multi-factor configurations related to an ethnic collective.

Another way of formulating complexity was delivered by Tsing (2005): she derived it from the notion of 'global connections'. In this approach, culture is the very element responsible for making connections possible. Nonetheless, these connections are not clear or well-resolved, they are in fact 'zones of awkward engagement' (2005:xi), bringing therefore the 'unexpected and unstable aspects of global interactions' (2005:3). Tsing described these uncertain but creative qualities that diversity introduces in the space of global interconnections as 'friction'. In this conceptualisation, misunderstanding is part of the system of 'odd connections', and thus complexity also involves incomprehensibility and indeterminacy.

Assessing the significance of complexity raised in this ethnography alongside the aforementioned theoretical outlines, it becomes clear that the complexity elicited by the life-journeys of Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta, Mr. Soh, Liu and Helen does not refer to a notion of culture as organisation of meaning. Rather, the life-journeys, through the support of a poetics of resonance, revealed that life is also made up of gaps and moments of suspended meanings. Furthermore, an assumed system of shared meaning that undergirds Geertz (1973) and Hannerz's (1992) understandings of culture is also challenged when the precarious and uncertain aspects of the situations lived through people's life-courses imposed moments of incomprehension and perplexity, making misunderstanding and opacity also components of their lives' complexity. As such, the instability inherent in the life-journeys portrayed here is more convergent with the inconstancy attached to Tsing's notion of complexity found in 'friction'.

Concerning the multiplication of categories proposed by Eriksen (2007) and Vertovec (2010) as a means to resist reducing the lives of migrants under the notion of ethnicity, these conceptions of

complexity may impose an over-determination of the migrants' position. Considering the life-journeys of Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta, Mr. Soh, Liu and Helen, this over-categorisation could help in signalling the multi-dimensional aspects of their trajectories; still, it would fail to render the undergoing transformations within some of these life-courses as well as the ambiguities and contradictions involved in these processes. The complexity invoked by the life-journeys documented here has meant to provide room for appreciation for what is not totally defined.

In other words, the complexity resonantly evoked through the life-journeys of Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta, Mr. Soh, Liu and Helen has aimed to be the expression of the 'uniqueness' of their human experiences, following Levinas's terms. In attempting to reach this, Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta, Mr. Soh, Liu and Helen could be deemed to be subjects whose lives were so rich and dense that no categorisation would ever be sufficient to define their beings. Since it is not possible to achieve an explication of the totality of their existences, mystery will always be part of the complexity that entails their lives. In respecting this mystery, the recourse to a poetics of resonance and to the notion of life-journeys just allows a glimpse into their respective experiences, valuing the potentialities of what each of them may hold and become. Within the complexity of their personal circumstances, Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta, Mr. Soh, Liu and Helen found their own ways to carry on their lives.

Having thus clarified the senses of complexity at stake, related issues such multiculturalism and multiple identities can be problematized.

6.3 FROM MULTIPLICITY TO COMPLEXITY: TOWARDS IMMENSITY

Because a notion of complexity in migration studies is generally grounded in forms of categorisation and classification, what is complex and elaborate becomes 'multi-' or 'multiple'. This is the case concerning the debates on 'multiculturalism' and on migrants' 'multiple identities'.

The life-journeys of Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta, Mr. Soh, Liu and Helen may raise questions about 'multiculturalism' because each of them was born in a different country – South Korea, Paraguay, Bolivia, or China – and I met them all in the same city, São Paulo.

In order to understand how the complexity of the life-journeys portrayed in this ethnography challenge some assumptions of the notion of multiculturalism, let's retrieve some key ideas and works under this designation.

As mentioned above, the debate on migrants and multiculturalism is largely conducted around migrants' position within a state. Therefore, 'multiculturalism' is a notion often coupled with others, such as 'integration', 'minority', 'majority', or 'community'.

Bauman, for instance, revealed that, in the discourses of culture and community expressed by ethnic groups living in a neighbourhood in London, there were 'communities within communities, as well as cultures across communities' (1996:10). For the author, this operation of reifying the terms 'community' and 'culture' as a conscious procedure to objectify certain elements of the human world was related to the field of ethno-politics, in which the affirmation of identities entailed positions of power.

Vertovec (2010) identified in the study of 'multi-ethnic contexts' the anthropological effort to re-assess the reaches of the notions of culture and ethnicity, finding in the examination of migration the possibilities to advance conceptual categories and frameworks. In his own contribution to this debate, he proposed the notion of 'super-diversity', which was discussed above.

However, by sticking to the reference of categorisations, both Bauman (1996) and Vertovec (2010), can only propose new frameworks by 'fragmenting' or 'multiplying' the categories of 'community', 'culture', and other related terms.

The life-journeys presented in this thesis does not elaborate Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta, Mr. Soh, Liu and Helen solely through the categories of the Brazilian state or other categories such as culture or community. If this ethnography can contribute anything to the debates on 'multiculturalism' it is by highlighting that it is possible to gain insight into how people engage with ideas of belonging through what Amit-Talai called 'the experience of everyday cultural multiplicity' (1995:141). In claiming an understanding of multiculturalism that stresses the role of individual agency and consciousness, Amit-Talai (1995) urges anthropological accounts that can convey how people themselves effectively operate ways of being 'multicultural' (or not).

In this sense, the relations established among some of the research participants were not substantiated ethnographically as relations between South Koreans and Paraguayans, for example. These relations were presented as particular conceptions in which Mr. Kwon and Mrs. Lee employed personal senses of Korean-ness in order to organise labour relationships with people like Kitty, who evinced her availability to work through a network that relied on a sense of Paraguayan-ness. In the minutiae revealed by the life-journeys of Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee and Kitty, their relationship was marked by inconstancies in their respective positions of power as 'boss', 'manager' and 'employee'. As Kitty resourcefully demonstrated when forcing Mr. Kwon and Mrs. Lee to hire her again in the restaurant, power is never a one-way street. Beyond the discourses of identity politics, the everyday practices of situated subjects do not offer the stability of fixed positions of power.

Since the discussion on multiculturalism has been generally focused on categories of groups and collectives as consistent wholes, there has been less attention paid to the dimension of subjectivity and to ambiguous forms of belonging. For this reason, the life-journeys of Julieta, Mr. Soh,

Liu and Helen, for example, are perhaps cases not appropriate for discussion under the multiculturalist framework.

While the complexity of the life-journeys cannot entirely fit within the discussion about the 'multiplicity of cultures', a similar problem affects the discussion about migrants' 'multiple identities'. The life-journeys of this ethnography can offer dense observations concerning the ambivalent and incomplete making and/or unmaking of migrants' subjectivities, but their complexity - as discussed above - does not correspond totally with what the extensive literature on migrants' identities suggests.

Bhachu (1985) defined the East African Sikh immigrants living in Britain as 'twice migrants'. In describing the network of elements linking the Asian groups in East Africa and the East African Sikh ones living in the United Kingdom, the author disclosed how these groups employed practices of marriage and dowry as means to activate processes of adaptation, continuity and change. The multiplicity conveyed here refers to the different continental locations lived subsequently by an assumed ethnic group and its efforts to maintain a rationale as a group through time and generations.

In a slightly different fashion, Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton (1994) suggested that the identity of transmigrants was shaped through constructions of race and ethnicity simultaneously conducted both in their home country and their host country. Consequently, the multiplicity of identities of transmigrants would be mostly related to figurations of citizenship, in which processes of hegemony and subordination demarcated the manifestation of such identities, too.

For Bachu (1985) and for Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton (1994), migrants' identities are thus based mostly on categories of culture, community and nation-state. Subjects become multiple according to the number of engagements with different categorical dimensions. A migrant's identity then is understood as an accumulation of all the categories one is related to.

When viewed from the perspective of identity, the life-journeys in this thesis reveal variations. Mr. Kwon and Mr. Lee's take on Korean-ness was remarkable -- they strived with full force to continue being 'Korean'. Though they had learned other languages (Portuguese and Spanish) and had lived outside of Korea (in Brazil or Paraguay) for a long time, Mr. Kwon and Mrs. Lee saw themselves as nothing but Korean. On the other hand, Julieta and Mr. Soh oscillated between their nationalities of origin and their involvements in Brazil, in a certain way 'accumulating' national senses of belonging in a transnational fashion. However, the cases of Liu and Helen provide the greatest exception to the identity analysis: neither of them organised their existences in national-cum-ethnic categories. In creating life-projects of their own, Liu and Helen challenged the categorisations of identities by means of a cosmopolitan outlook. Through Liu and Helen's life-journeys, it was possible to envisage unconventional ways of being and becoming, not in terms of categorical identities, but in term of what

I called 'immensity'. It is my intention in this section to extend the designation of 'immensity' to include all the life-journeys portrayed in this ethnography and propose it as an alternative to the notion of identity.

I would like to argue that the approach through life-journeys is incompatible with a sense of identity founded in categorisation. In retaining the senses of 'uniqueness' and 'mystery,' as inspired by Levinas, people's trajectories reach a complexity that cannot be encompassed by a notion of identity based on social and cultural classifications.

Firstly, the elaborate rendition provided by the life-journeys substantiated in this ethnography questions the assumption underlining the idea of identity as a coherent delineation of a being. In showing how contradictions and ambiguities substantially embed the making of people's lives, the approach through life-journeys makes incongruity and inconsistency something integral to the experience of being in the world with others. Contradictions have been assimilated by notions of identities that are based on categorisations as multiplicity. In order to keep the coherence involved in this conception of identity, subjects are said to bear multiple consistent characters. Thus, contradictions are split and decomposed so that small units of coherence are able to be appreciated, even though this set of units may be conflicting with one another. Similarly, as discussed in Chapter 4, ambiguities have been explored in the literature on migration and diasporas as 'in-between-ness', 'hybridity', or 'creolisation'. Because these denominations consider ambiguities as suspended circumstances, infinite passages, or unresolved combinations, they ultimately corroborate the existence of at least two sorts of undeclared coherent wholes. The ambiguities brought to the fore by Julieta and Mr. Soh's life-journeys indicate that there are cases in which one lives two senses of identification simultaneously, not as interruption, nor as fusion, but as oscillation within the conflicts this process entails.

Not only is coherence thereby challenged, but the complexity involved in the unfolding of the portrayed life-journeys equally contests the supposition of unity and completeness often imparted from the notion of identity. Because it relies on modes of categorisations and coherence, 'identity' in migration studies is a designation that does not encourage the consideration of 'messy' or 'scrappy' ways of existing. Furthermore, it frequently does not take into account different temporalities and the possibility of 'unexpected' transformations, because of the influence exerted by the operation of generalisation as an act for categorising.

Challenging the senses of coherence, unity and completeness implicated in the notion of identity, the approach through life-journeys suggests an alternative that considers contradiction, ambiguity, inconsistency and incompleteness as working elements in the making of ways of being and becoming via the idea of 'immensity'. I intend to consolidate the idea of 'immensity' by incorporating

some influential works on migrants' identity that I hope will cement the transformation of 'immensity' into a viable concept.

The first important inspiration in this direction concerns the attention to immigrant discourses of Anglo-Saxons in Israel by Rapport (1998). Considering the discourses of 'Anglo-Saxon Jews' in Israel, Rapport identified how his two research participants constructed their immigrant identities by maintaining the 'central imagery of their old selves' (1998:81). The immigrants' previous lives in America did not have to be suppressed to give expression to the new experiences taking place in Israel. Quite the reverse, their 'American' understanding of the world in fact grounded the opportunity for them to negotiate in Israel a possible (and contradictory) homeland. In claiming a place for contradiction in the symbolic constitution of the world, Rapport asserted the importance of operating in terms of a 'both/and' attitude, in which a person is able to live 'a plurality of social worlds at any one time' and 'the symbolic classifications and social structures of human worlds do not stand alone or uncontested or in clear and coherent relationship to one another' (1997b:671). It is this possibility of preserving diverse and conflicting realms of subjectivity simultaneously that I believe the idea of immensity sustains.

Another important element in composing this idea of immensity is the recognition of the 'mystery' in each being, as Levinas (1987) conceived it, and the 'stranger in ourselves', as Chambers (1994) described it. Only by admitting this ungraspable part in the constitution of any self, the inner character of a person can be deemed open-ended and can 'acquire a form that is always contingent, in transit, without goal, without an end' (Chambers 1994:25). Alongside this characteristic incompleteness of being and becoming in the notion of immensity, for Jackson (2013b), the recognition of an 'otherness' in oneself and this 'capacity for becoming other in relation to other selves' would be 'the basis for mutual recognition and empathy' (2013b:205).

Reaching this point, the notion of immensity finds complete correspondence with Jackson's (2013b) considerations on the 'multiple selves' of migrants. He argued that the view of a stable self possessing a single core should be complemented with 'descriptions of human improvisation, experimentation, opportunism, and existential mobility, showing that individuals often struggle less with aligning their lives with given moral or legal norms than with finding ways of negotiating *the ethical space* between external constraints and personal imperatives' (Jackson 2013:203).

In concluding the formulation of the notion of immensity with Jackson's existential approach, I find it important to return to the life-journeys of this ethnography. The life-experiences of Liu and Helen were the ones that originally sparked the ethnographic considerations of a notion of immensity, as it was undertaken in Chapter 5. In extending the notion of immensity to the life-journeys of Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta and Mr. Soh, the contradictions involved in their respective searches are

made evident: they struggled to be attached to a single national belonging or to hold a double experience of belonging. Although each of them relied on national-cum-ethnic categorisations, the incoherent and unstable experiences lived through their life-journeys make their trajectories in a certain way open and incomplete. In trying not to be 'multiple' in national terms, Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee and Kitty were constantly overwhelmed by unexpected circumstances that defied the limited coherence of their categorical choice. In oscillating between national categories of affiliation, Julieta and Mr. Soh lived through the paradoxes of making sense of two different standards at the same time, at times assessing these standards in terms of gains and losses. In (involuntarily) indicating the limitations of certain social or cultural categories and the particular capacities engaged in order to cope with the challenges of their respective trajectories, Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta and Mr. Soh are people of extraordinary immensity, as are Liu and Helen.

6.4 EXISTENCES IN MIGRATION

At this point, it can be more evident how the phenomenological approach constituted by a poetics of resonance and the singularity of life-journeys is in dialogue with a variety of themes in migration studies. First, this ethnographic account echoes the questioning of conventional categories and frameworks that previous works on migrants and people's mobility have posed. Second, an elaboration of complexity addresses the ongoing preoccupation with reconfiguring the scope of analysis by including elements that were heretofore ignored. That said, this thesis has consciously rejected relying on social and cultural categories often present in migration studies. However, the attempt to grasp minutiae that were generally overlooked just worth taking once they support the appreciation of migrants' lives as expressions of singular existences

In refusing to reduce the other to a mere object - as Levinas (1967) advised - and going beyond the classifications of any world-view - through a cosmopolitan outlook (Rapport 2010) and an existential stance (Jackson 2013) - the core intention of this ethnography was to bring the most particular features in the lives of Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta, Mr. Soh, Liu and Helen that make these people tangibly and disconcertingly humans.

As Jackson maintains: 'We must go with the broken flow of migrant narratives and migrant imaginaries, working out ways of doing justice to the often paratactic, contradictory, opportunistic, and improvisatory character of transitional experience' (2013:8).

By disclosing the mundane, the minute and the unanticipated of the everyday practices of specific migrant lives, we become able to acknowledge that, 'beyond the significant differences, there

are similarities that illuminate the shared and equivalent experiences as humans as much as migrants' (Gronseth 2013).

CHAPTER 7

JOURNEYS IN THE CITY OF SÃO PAULO

Previous chapters followed how Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta, Mr. Soh, Liu and Helen conceived particular understandings of what life was in São Paulo and beyond through their distinctive trajectories.

In this section of the thesis, my intention is to highlight how an approach based on people's life-journeys can offer insights into the way cities are personally 'animated': activated or de-activated, appropriated or misappropriated, shaped or imposed, enforced or transgressed, according to the way in which cities are inhabited; hence cities become entwined with people's life-in-the-making.

With 20,284,891 inhabitants²²⁶, within its metropolitan area, the municipality of São Paulo becomes a concentration of possibilities with 20,284,891 ingenious life-solutions. In bringing forth some of these life-courses, assumptions about territory, neighbourhood, networks, and migration - usually associated with the idea of ethnicity when discussing the urban environment - can be addressed in new terms.

In this chapter, too, a poetics of resonance will infuse the text with the ethnographer's own experiential sentiments of living in São Paulo, offering narrative counterpoints to the discussions being raised.

17:35. 18°C. José Paulino Street and Prates Street corner. A massive stream of people walking from José Paulino Street to Luz Station. Cold late afternoon, grey sky. Coats, jackets and hoodies rushing up. Cars gridlocked in Prates Street's northbound lane. People are in such a hurry that they dare to cross the street even when the lights are red for pedestrians. A multitude goes in the same direction.

17:43. 'A Diva' is the first store to close its doors on the block. Car and motorbike horns are honking. The bus stop is not crowded. 719P-Metrô Armênia/Terminal Pinheiros bus draws up. More horns. The traffic is becoming wild and people are getting tense. Drivers get angry at pedestrians who are crossing the streets without paying due attention. People seem to be fleeing from something or it is a craving to get home - no matter what - after a tiring work day.

17:57. Two other stores, 'Hapanema' and 'Jóia Feminina', closed their doors. Raindrops are falling. Umbrellas are blooming and multiplying. The multitude is still headed to Luz station. One can be overwhelmed by the tide.

If you hold your breath and float, the current can lead you to Luz subway station, where you can reach Pinheiros subway station and take the train to Santo Amaro. From there, it is possible to get the purple subway line heading to Capão Redondo. At Capão Redondo station, go left, circumventing the central bus station and take the shuttle Jd. Jangadeiro. Get off only at the end of the bus journey. After two and a half hours, you stop at Simão Caetano Nunes Avenue and face policemen firing rubber bullets and tear gas towards a group of people who are demonstrating violently. They set fire to the streets because the last two days's rainwater flooded their houses and no help has been provided by the city council. You will have to wait for the situation to come 'under control' in order to proceed to your home.

However, you can catch another stream. From Luz station, you go to Carrão subway station and take the bus São Mateus. One hour and a half later, around 2200 Mateus Bei Avenue, you get off and look for 500 Margarida Cardoso dos Santos Street. If you try to get your bearings with local people, they will ask you, 'Are you going to the Women's House?' Once a month, migrant women from Bolivia and Brazil, who experienced violence at home, have tea together and tell their stories.

²²⁶ According to the 2014 Estimation by SEADE - Fundação Sistema Estadual de Análise de Dados (Foundation State System for Data Analysis), an organisation of the State Government of São Paulo.

But Bom Retiro has infinite courses. Once in a while, the flow leads me to Butantã. I take the yellow subway line to Butantã station and get on the Parque Continental bus. On Corifeu de Azevedo Marques Avenue, around the number 1500, I get off at Elis Regina Square. Then, I take José Melo Street and go straight ahead looking for the number 787. In a block of buildings of a former BNH²²⁷ housing program, I look for one of the two-room apartments on the third floor, where a friendly lady who was born in South Korea speaks to me in a slow-paced Portuguese. She checks her Portuguese-Japanese dictionary constantly and imagines possible futures for her one-year old daughter.

You never know where Bom Retiro can take you. Keep holding your breath and drift along. Drift and you end up landing at Jorge Wilstermann International Airport in Cochabamba. Dry air, high altitude and a friend's family to catch up with. Drift and you will be standing on the crowded streets of Namdeomun, where old ladies behind carton boxes exchange dollars into yons, drawing bank notes from waist packs attached to their bodies.

Drift and let it go.

7.1 MIGRANTS AND PLACES

The same debate that considered mobility and movement as new foundations for re-assessing concepts such as culture, nation, or identity in the human sciences; also prompted questions about the crucial position of space and place in the re-configuration of global studies and migration studies.

Contesting the idea that associated global processes with the notion of de-territorialisation, Gupta and Ferguson (1992) stated that, in fact, the role of space was fundamental to understanding the social and cultural transformation involved in the interconnectivity of the world. For them, spaces were interconnected hierarchically according to the configuration of power relations that determined the manner in which 'culture' was imparted to institute a place. Therefore, it was necessary to pay attention to 'the process whereby space achieves a distinctive identity as a place' (Gupta and Ferguson 1992:8). Stressing the importance of meaning-making as the fundamental practice constituting places, they examined the dimensions of the politics of representation involved in global imaginaries in order to re-conceptualise space in terms of processes of re-territorialisation.

From this original provocation, at least two main streams of studies concerning the relationship between mobile people and places were developed. One has concentrated on the intersection between power structures and people's resources in order to understand the positionalities generated between migrants and places. Another has examined people's own sense of culture, home, or movement to reach a notion of place.

In regard to the first strand, Glick Schiller and Caglar (2011) were interested in identifying migrants' relationships to cities by exploring how the positionalities of migrants and cities within

²²⁷ Programa Banco Nacional de Habitação (BNH) – National Housing Bank Program – a governmental organisation created during the military regime in order to manage housing policies in Brazil.

economic, political, and cultural fields of power are shaped globally by power hierarchies. In calling for a political economy analysis that enabled migration studies to move beyond 'culture', the notion of 'scale' was proposed to chart the different positions held by migrants and cities within different but interconnected scales of governance and political representation.

In the second trend of studies, Olwig and Hastrup asserted the important 'role of place in the conceptualization and practice of culture' (1997:1). For them, culture should not be replaced or overcome, but reinvented. This strand explores how people 'site' culture, i.e., how people develop situated practices of culture in specific locations, notions of attachment to places should be acknowledged in the interrelationship between the global and the local.

Taking the concern with place farther, Bönisch-Brednich and Trundle (2010) argued for more attention to processes of 'emplacement', in which migrants should necessarily be considered involved in historical and existential conditions of specific spaces. In the making of places through emplacement, distinctions between the local and the global become irrelevant, as migrants' own assertions of their status and experiences were not defined in these terms. Instead, their everyday practices lived out in space were conveyed as being contradictory and shifting.

Following the reasoning discussed above, my focus on life-journeys converges with the need to de-construct assertions that designated some parts of São Paulo as 'ethnic places'. By following Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta, Mr. Soh, Liu and Helen in the city, their life-trajectories, in fact, did not translate their positionalities in terms of scales. On the contrary, their mobilities confused levels of territoriality - local, national and international – in modes more similar to the 'odd connections' suggested by Tsing (2005). The everyday aspects of their course in São Paulo were not manifested as clear practices of 'siting culture', but their presences were certainly expressed inextricably in situated processes in which the city was also part of the contradictions and conflicts they lived through.

Thus, in the remaining sections, I examine what life-journeys provided as resource in questioning the idea of Bom Retiro being a 'neighbourhood of migrants' in São Paulo. This consideration will support a re-allocation of the theme of ethnicity in the city and an alternative view of São Paulo is then proposed.

7.2 BOM RETIRO AND BEYOND

Having played a significant role in the formation of São Paulo, Bom Retiro is one of the neighbourhoods in the city centre that has become a character in its own right. This character is recurrently raised in historical particularities or anecdotal stories about the district. Particularities and stories that also inspired my research project to believe that Bom Retiro had a kind of identity for explaining the presence of international migrants in the city.

Geographically, Bom Retiro is a district located in the original city centre of São Paulo. Its administrative limits are defined by a ring road that follows the Tietê River on the north, the tracks of the suburban railway on the south and southwest, and the lanes of Cruzeiro do Sul Avenue on the east. Geomorphologically, Bom Retiro is characterized by a slight elevation on its eastern portion,

while its lowest area lies close to Tietê River. Some residents know this higher part as ‘Upper Bom Retiro’, and the lower one, as ‘Lower Bom Retiro’. Historically, ‘Upper Bom Retiro’ was occupied first and consequently the main public services (schools, the botanical garden, and the train and subway stations) are concentrated there. ‘Lower Bom Retiro’ is primarily residential and still retain some of the warehouses of its industrial time.

Bom Retiro provided a fundamental base for this research: everyone who became part of it I met in Bom Retiro. Apart from this, expectations I might have had about a working sense of neighbourhood that would integrate my considerations on the presence of international migrants existing in this area of the city of São Paulo were somehow frustrated. Bom Retiro, as is going to be further explored below, was not an encapsulating factor or force that permeated equally and significantly all the lives it happened to affect. On the contrary, its quality of letting people navigate to other parts of the city or the globe, according to their own life-needs, was the aspect most evidenced by the life-journeys gathered in this account.

The table below shows the places beyond Bom Retiro that people circulated through their life-journeys during the period of my fieldwork:

Places of circulation				
	Neighbourhoods in São Paulo near to Bom Retiro	Neighbourhoods in São Paulo far from Bom Retiro	Cities in Brazil outside São Paulo	Outside Brazil
Mr. Kwon		Vila Leopoldina		
Mrs. Lee				
Kitty	Vila Buarque, Brás			Paraguay
Julieta	Kantuta Square, Aclimação, República and Sé districts	Sapopemba	Cotia	Bolivia
Mr. Soh				South Korea
Liu	Vila Buarque			China
Helen		Butantã	Brasília	Barbados

Table 2 - Life-journeys and places of circulation

The distinct points and scales of circulation in each life-journey are worth noting. This varied from my having no record of Mrs. Lee leaving Bom Retiro to Julieta’s diverse and multi-scaled itineraries. Certainly, the particular sort of relationship each of the research participants established with me provided different opportunities to follow their routines, but the fundamental element that directed their movement within the city of São Paulo and beyond was the need to fulfil specific requirements in order to make their daily lives keep going.

For instance, Mr. Kwon ran his businesses in Bom Retiro, residing in the back of the flower shop. Once or twice a week, he headed to CEAGESP²²⁸, in Vila Leopoldina, west zone of São Paulo, driving an old Kia Besta van in order to purchase wholesale products for the restaurant or the flower

²²⁸ Companhia de Entrepostos e Armazéns Gerais de São Paulo (General Warehouses of São Paulo Company), the wholesale supply centre for the municipality of São Paulo.

shop. He would begin his day so early on these occasions that, when employees were beginning the morning work shift, Mr. Kwon would already be parking the van in front of the restaurant or the flower shop, ready for us to unload its content to the storage room, shelves or fridges.

On the other hand, I never observed Mrs. Lee outside of Mr. Kwon's restaurant or flower shop - she was always busy inside one or another of these places. Living upstairs from the restaurant, she worked in the same place as where she made her home. As she did not have days off, her mother and other female Korean friends frequently visited her in the restaurant or the flower shop to chat and share portions of food with her.

Kitty, who worked in Mr. Kwon's restaurant and lived nearby, frequented the health care unit in Bom Retiro, after deciding to have her baby in São Paulo. Due to her pregnancy, she was directed to other units in adjacent neighbourhoods to undergo specific examinations or see specialists that were not available in Bom Retiro's health care unit. Because she and her new partner were unable to find ways to live in the city, they both moved to Paraguay after the birth of Kitty's baby.

In a different way, Julieta did not live or work in Bom Retiro. Bom Retiro was a place where she had infrequent meetings related to her engagement in the migrants' social movement in São Paulo. Not only Bom Retiro, but other city-centre neighbourhoods were regularly places where Julieta would visit city hall departments or meet officials and other migrants. As Julieta advocated on behalf of migrants' access to health care system and human-centred childbirth, she herself decided to have her second child in a public health unit specialising in natural child delivery in Sapopemba, south zone of São Paulo. She lived in Cotia, another municipality close to São Paulo, and thus spent a lot of time commuting so as to carry out her commitments. In addition, she managed to maintain her bonds with family members and with Our Lady of Urkupiña in Quillacollo.

Concerning Mr. Soh, he lived in an apartment in Bom Retiro with his wife. His two grown sons had families of their own, but one of them was his partner in the travel agency established in Bom Retiro. Mr. Soh used to travel a great deal around Brazil and the world, frequently touring with Korean clients living in Brazil. During my fieldwork experience, he led the group language students on a trip around South Korea, where he was able to reunite with some of his family members.

In Liu's case, Bom Retiro was the place where she lived with her husband. As she became pregnant, she (like Kitty) attended medical appointments in the health care unit in Bom Retiro and other units in neighbouring districts. After giving birth, Liu planned to travel back to China in order to bring her firstborn son to live with her in São Paulo.

Lastly, Helen lived with her husband and daughter in Butantã, a neighbourhood in the west zone of the city. She visited Bom Retiro to buy South Korean products in the specialised small markets there and attend some of the events organised by cultural organisations responsible for promoting South Korea in São Paulo. By chance, she began to attend Portuguese classes in the public school in Bom Retiro as well. Sadly, because the subway line connecting her region to the city centre was often interrupted on Sundays and the bus lines were unreliable, she gave up going to the classes. The city inflicted complications that were too difficult to surmount, given that she had to take care of her daughter as well. It was also because of her daughter that Helen went to the University of São Paulo's hospital or the health care unit in Butantã. During the time I was able to be with her, she and her

family left São Paulo to visit her husband's brother in Brasília during Easter and her husband's father in Barbados for Christmas.

Activities and motives for circulation					
	Bom Retiro	Near Bom Retiro	Far from Bom Retiro	Outside the city of São Paulo	Outside Brazil
Mr. Kwon	Workplace and home		Wholesale supply centre		
Mrs. Lee	Workplace and home				
Kitty	Medical appointments, workplace and home	Medical appointments and former partner's home			Partner's family
Julieta	Migrants' social movements meetings	Migrants' social movements meetings	Medical appointments	Home	Family
Mr. Soh	Workplace and home				Family and tour
Liu	Medical appointments and home	Medical appointments			Family
Helen	Language learning, cultural events and small grocery market		Home and medical appointments	Husband's family	Husband's family

Table 3 - Activities and motives of circulation in the life-journeys

All these different itineraries only make sense in the rationale of each life-journey. Each course animated the making of life in the city of São Paulo and beyond in its own manner. In approaching people's lives through the capacities of their life-journeys, the notion of neighbourhood requires a new contour. As highlighted already, Bom Retiro could not completely encompass the dynamics raised by the life-journeys sketched here. Except for Mrs. Lee, all other of the life-courses spilt over into other localities, setting up connections of varied natures.

Following Gupta and Ferguson's (1992) suggestion of examining how places acquire their identities, it is worth tracing how the human sciences in Brazil contributed to the cultural construction of Bom Retiro as a 'community' or 'locality'. Bom Retiro has been a recurrent reference in neighbourhood studies in the social sciences in Brazil. Florestan Fernandes (2004 [1944]) found in Bom Retiro a place where groups of children organised themselves by operating folkloric forms in order to produce social classifications, senses of belonging and order among themselves. These groups, called 'trocinhas', were said to be deeply embedded in neighbourhood relations. Assuming a certain unity and stability, the bonds initiated through 'trocinhas' were understood to also develop into close relationships in the neighbourhood for adult life. Later on, Truzzi (2001) introduced the notion of ethnicity in the analysis of Bom Retiro as a unit of study, and arranged the presence of acknowledged ethnic groups along a history of succession and complementarity: the Jewish community that historically replaced the Italians, and the Koreans that succeeded the Jews, in a continuous process undertaken without conflicts.

This latter discussion on ethnic groups as defining elements to characterise Bom Retiro as a neighbourhood prompted studies based on ideas of territory and the material marks that some of these ethnic groups imprinted on the area. In this way, Bom Retiro has been designated as a 'neighbourhood of foreigners' in which international migrants were variously involved in its parcelling and developing of land during the first half of the 20th century (Mangili 2009), in the production of modernist buildings between 1950 and 1970 (Koulioumba 2011), and in the formation of institutional solidarity among Jews (Feldman 2011) and Koreans (Sampaio 2011) that established temples and churches, organisations of education, recreation and mutual assistance along ethnic lines.

Going back to the life-journeys of Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta, Mr. Soh, Liu and Helen, it becomes clear that *their presence in Bom Retiro can be misconstrued if they are taken as expressions of ethnic occurrences based on local relations circumscribed by the territorial limits of the area*. First, not all participants relied on ethnic categorization to conduct their lives; Liu and Helen contested these characterisations. Second, Bom Retiro had varying levels of significance in the overall outlook of each life-course. As the circulation attached to these life-journeys indicated, Bom Retiro only makes sense when it is deemed to enable these same life-journeys to be concatenated with other parts of the city of São Paulo and beyond.

Not only did the life-journeys induce me methodologically to go beyond the neighbourhood as unit of study, but Bom Retiro itself should be understood as a very heterogeneous place in itself. Overlapping the Bom Retiro 'neighbourhood of foreigners' then, were also the Bom Retiro of squatters' housing occupations, the Bom Retiro of the circuit of crack users, and the Bom Retiro of artistic programmes from the Museum of the Portuguese Language, the State Art Gallery and the State Concert Hall (Frugoli, Lopes and Sklair 2009). Consequently, any attempt to generalise a predominant feature about the area should be taken with great caution.

9:04. I sit at a table on the corner of Graça Street and Ribeiro de Lima Street. The day begins overcast but is becoming sunny. I am at the 'Casa do Pão de Queijo' café and order a piece of 'pão de queijo'²²⁹ and a cup of coffee and milk. Many buses run on Ribeiro de Lima and Graça streets to go to other neighbourhoods: 209C – Vila Madalena; 5114 – Terminal P.Isabel; 118C – Sta Cecília.

Passersby fill the streets. Some seem to go to work. Others, to buy goods. A mother and her son are having breakfast at the same café. They are at the counter and are eating fast because they are rushing to 'Equipaloja', a shop that sells clothing store equipment, such as mannequins, clothing hangers, seats, mirrors, shelves, racks, etc.

Young boys are pushing handcarts with heavy packed fabrics. One of them slows his pace as the beige, red and grey rolls of fabric are rolling sideways.

Taxis speed down Ribeiro de Lima and Graça Street lanes.

Women are already carrying bags full of clothes at this hour. A long black-haired woman carries very large white bags and her forehead shows signs of their being heavy. An old lady in red

²²⁹ Portuguese: Cheese bread. Snack with cheese and cassava flour.

pulls a big purple suitcase along the Ribeiro de Lima Street kerb, pausing once in a while to window-shop.

A man sits at a table on the kerb. He has a black backpack and a laptop suitcase. On his mobile, he is talking in Portuguese to someone called Taís. He says that he now has a new clothing collection and would like to visit her store this morning. He pauses and admits that his collection is not knitwear. As the conversation finishes, it seems that the man has not been successful. He, then, flips through his hardcover phonebook.

A public service cleaner in green uniform sweeps the kerb on Graça Street.

From where I am sitting, I can see one of the oldest synagogues in São Paulo, blue tiles and dome.

A black man wearing a black T-shirt and black cap stops at the corner with his mobile pressed to his right ear. He speaks in a language I cannot recognize. He asks the cleaner for information and keeps walking in the direction of Graça Street.

Another man arrives and greets the man with the phonebook in Portuguese. He is carrying a tiny blue suitcase. He comments joyfully on a request for 30 pairs of trousers that he received earlier that week, but his female boss was not interested in such small orders. Both men leave the café together.

A group of four noisy women arrives at the café and sit near the counter.

An old gentleman carrying a cart full of fruits (bananas, papaya, watermelon and pineapple) parks in front of the café. He prepares his cart to sell slices of fruits on the corner of Graça and Ribeiro de Lima streets.

An 'Asian'-featured man, wearing a green polo T-shirt, grey cap and jeans, sits at the café table on the kerb with a newspaper printed in oriental letters. I believe it is Chinese, but I am not sure. It is definitely not Korean. The café employee serves him a pastry and a white cup.

A food truck stops on Graça Street. Two men carry industrial packages of bread and cake on their shoulders to a little yellow store. The truck lights flash intermittently.

The fruit cart man slices a watermelon.

A man wearing black trousers and jacket, without any shirt on, passes by carrying paper cartons in his hand. He is sweating.

A traffic official in brown and yellow uniform checks on the parked cars on Graça Street. She observes the food truck and pulls out an electronic device. The driver says something to her and goes to the truck cabin.

9:46 – I leave the café.

The presence of international migrants in São Paulo gives rise to an inclination to categorise spaces in the city by ethnicity. This surreptitiously imparts a sense of uniformity and consistency to social relationships and, subsequently, to the places in which such relationships are believed to take place; thus, ethnic relationships are inaccurately overlapped with neighbourhood relationships.

Leme and Feldman (2011) examine the participation of non-nationals in urban processes of different scales in São Paulo during the first half of the 20th century. Non-nationals were found in the international companies responsible for establishing urban services in the city, such as railway and tramway transport, or electricity and water supply. Immigrants also set up small businesses in the city's central area and were involved in projects for the development of new industrial areas beyond the urban centre. These different scales of participation in building São Paulo's infra-structure contributed to improve access to the city centre, to integrate different districts and to expand the city towards its periphery. In this context, it was clear that ethnicity, as a category for determining 'cultural' identity to places, did not play a defining role in the material constitution of São Paulo.

All in all, ethnicity is not an automatic aspect to attribute to spaces where international migrants manifest their presence in São Paulo, as is indicated by the multi-scaled city's materiality revealed by Leme and and Feldman (2011), by people's mobilities through their respective life-journeys, and by the heterogeneous social practices enacted simultaneously in the city (Frugoli, Lopes and Sklair 2009) .

If ethnicity in terms of fixity was not an accurate reference to define the presence of international migrants in the city of São Paulo, then ethnicity in terms of its being resource for exploring the city - exploring the uncertainty brought together by its vastness - was significantly manifest in two ways during my fieldwork: through brief encounters among strangers, and through people's mobility as apprehended in some of the life-journeys that have been presented in previous chapters. Next, I focus on these in turn.

7.3 ETHNICITY AT PLAY: BRIEF ENCOUNTERS IN THE OVERWHELMING CITY

São Paulo is the most populous and wealthiest city in Brazil²³⁰. Its massiveness can sometimes be perplexing. For example, transport for 20,284,891 people living in the metropolitan area is still a central issue in urban life: the average time for commuting can reach 2 hours and 38 minutes and has been increasing steadily for both upper and lower classes for the last two decades²³¹; concomitantly the appalling wealth inequality means that São Paulo also bears the title of 'city with the largest fleet of helicopters in the world'²³². São Paulo can be a disconcerting city. No one can be sure whether the city will allow us to be on time, to have water service for the whole year or to arrive at home safe. It seems to be a city perpetually on the edge of collapse.

If Simmel (1971 [1903]) characterised the metropolis as the site where everything is intensified due to the multiplicity of economic and social dynamics taking place - offering incessant

²³⁰ See the 2014 Estimation by Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE) – Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics.

²³¹ See the 2013 reports 'Tempo de deslocamento casa-trabalho no Brasil (1992-2009): Diferenças entre regiões metropolitanas, níveis de renda e sexo' by Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada (IPEA) and 'Pesquisa sobre mobilidade urbana – Semana da Mobilidade 2015' by Instituto Brasileiro de Opinião Pública e Estatística (IBOPE) – Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics.

²³² See 'São Paulo ultrapassa NY e tem maior frota de helicópteros do mundo'. *Veja.com*, 19/08/2013, available on . Accessed on 23/04/2016.

stimulation and requiring a particular blasé state of mind before its numerous fluctuations and discontinuities - São Paulo adds another level of intensity to these circumstances through its continuous instabilities. São Paulo as a metropolis can exist as an overwhelming and disorienting experience.

The more than 20 million lives living, working and circulating within the metropolitan area make it an adventure of stumbling across thousands of unfamiliar faces every day. Again, if Simmel (1971[1903]) is accurate in describing the necessary attitude of reserve a person should hold in order to mentally survive in a metropolis of massive human proximity, one might suggest that, in a megalopolis such as São Paulo, the required detachment to live among the multitudes is embedded in the degrees with which one considers other people in the city to be strangers (Simmel 1971[1908]). In many ways, the brief encounters among the unacquainted in São Paulo carry the synthesis of nearness and distance assigned to the position of the 'stranger', someone that is not part of one's intimate circle, but who is not a complete alien either.

In the case of international migrants in São Paulo, the brief encounters among strangers in the city make ethnicity a central reference point in the animation of a specific kind of urban relationship. Whereas ethnicity did not appear as an intrinsic attribute concentrated territorially during my fieldwork, certainly it was recurrently stated, assigned or summoned during these fleeting moments of proximity between strangers that I likewise experienced as an ethnographer living in the city.

Ethnicity in São Paulo can be a genre of 'catchwords', as Rapport (1987, 1994) defines it in a commensurate study of strangerhood in the Canadian city of St John's. How do people flung together in the city's streets, shops, pubs and public institutions interact? They do so by way of clichés and catchwords: 'words or phrases taken up and repeated so that in a particular social environment they become not merely commonplace but stereotypical, and not merely popular but emblematic' (Rapport 1994:130). The city at any one point in time represents a kind of community of common phrases. This formulaic sort of verbal exchange confers to strangers the possibilities to be momentarily related in the making of the city.

This was certainly impressed upon me in different situations I observed and in places in the city that I moved through. As someone with a Japanese background, my physical features frequently sparked comments on ethnicity and on the presence of international migrants in the city - though I was born in São Paulo.

In these brief encounters, when one of the parts - me, in fact - was attributed a high degree of incommensurability, the verbal manifestation did not usually take the form of a conversation with me, the supposed 'other', as it was assumed that this 'other' (me) would not even understand Portuguese.

On 13 November 2013, I was walking on Ribeiro de Lima Street in Bom Retiro and a group of young people in casual clothes was coming from the opposite direction. As I advanced towards my apartment, one of the young men commented right in front of me that many Koreans used to live in Bom Retiro and they usually enslaved Bolivians in sewing sweatshops...

The day before, when I was leaving the train station at Brás, an adjacent neighbourhood to Bom Retiro, I clumsily stumbled into an old gentleman and, despite my apologising in Portuguese, he kept walking and complained loudly how bad mannered Chinese people were...

In Aclimação district, south zone of the city, I was walking among the stalls of the weekly open market on 5 June 2014, when one of its sellers greeted me *Anyonhaseyo! Nihau! Konbauah!*, salutations in Korean, Chinese and Japanese respectively...

These three flashes can roughly be considered 'encounters' in the literal sense of the word. Although they rather seem to be people's projections onto me, they are also flimsy expressions of the awareness that the million possible meetings with strangers in São Paulo incessantly challenge people's routines. Ethnicity as catchword, then, works as a reassuring practice to re-establish a certain order to the puzzling city, situating people's presence in specific places, albeit prejudicially and distortedly. Here is the cliché of ethnicity as a mini-institution of social exchange.

However, there was equally space for generosity and curiosity in these momentary contacts. On 17 November 2014, I met an old friend in Bom Retiro and we were having coffee together at a very popular kosher²³³ café on Correia de Melo Street. It had been quite a while since I had last seen him before leaving São Paulo to come to St Andrews. As a result, we were fondly catching up. Suddenly, a bearded old gentleman wearing a kipah²³⁴ and carrying out his take-away meal interrupted us to say that my friend and I conversing manifested such beauty that he had to compliment us, turning to me *Você é²³⁵ yepedah*. As I did not understand him entirely, I asked for clarification. *Você não é coreana?²³⁶*, he enquired. I told him I was born in Brazil and that my father was from Japan. The old gentleman explained that 'yepedah' meant beautiful in Korean. He left my friend and I, underlining *Vocês são pessoas muito bonitas²³⁷*.

Similarly, on 8 January 2014, I met my partner at the private leisure centre next to his office after his workday. The leisure centre was located in Paraíso, south zone of São Paulo. We were having beer together at one of its tables when a mature man approached us, carrying a glass of beer and visibly drunk. He introduced himself saying that he had a wife and three children who had just left the place a few hours before. He lived nearby and the leisure centre had been his life since he was five years old. He then asked me whether I was Korean or Chinese. I replied I was born in Brazil and had a Japanese background. The man remarked that my physical features did not look like they were from Japanese origins. After a pause, he mentioned that some years ago he used to work as a real estate agent in Aclimação, south zone, and he believed that Koreans and Chinese were increasingly populating the neighbourhood. Some years ago Koreans could be seen in the leisure centre, but because they spoke in Korean and kept to themselves, the centre had essentially expelled them. On the other hand, recently Chinese people were buying many plots and estates in Aclimação. As a real estate agent, he sold a R\$ 5 million-building site to a little Chinese man that no one could tell that he

²³³ Food prepared according to Jewish rules.

²³⁴ The head covering worn by observant Jewish men.

²³⁵ Portuguese: You are yepedah.

²³⁶ Portuguese: Are you not Korean?

²³⁷ Portuguese: You are beautiful people.

had money at all. The little Chinese man even paid his part of the transaction in cash, around R\$ 100.000,00, which the man believed was all down to money laundering.

In both these instances, conversation was triggered by allusion to ethnicity as a manner of physical approximation. In attributing an ethnic belonging to my person, both men attempted to establish rudimentary opening rules for our verbal exchange. Although I did not neatly fit the proposed role, the momentary interchange among strangers in the city was successful, regardless of whether what had been said was actually true or not. Ethnicity as clichéd theme not only generated succinct meetings among strangers in São Paulo, but also allowed people to share their perceptions and images about the ever-changing city —perceptions that in their eyes were fulfilled.

The art of transforming such brief encounters among strangers into relationships in the city of another kind perhaps depends on the momentum of the two or more life-journeys concerned, and whether they are able and willing to attend to one another and thus to build reciprocal interests or points of contact – such as was the case in the ethnographer's work, interacting with the life-journeys already presented.

Do you see me?

Yes, you're Korean like me. I can trust you, we can share spicy kimchi and complain about this horrible country.

You don't see me.

Hey, I see you jogging around Luz Park. You're an oriental girl and I'll tell my friends right in front of you that you Koreans invaded Bom Retiro. I'll say this to your face because you Koreans don't understand Portuguese, do you? I'll tell my friends in front of you that Koreans exploit the Bolivians in hidden sweatshops. I'll refer to you always in the third person because you're Korean.

Can you see me?

Yes, teacher, you're a good person. You wake up so early to teach us Portuguese on Sundays, and for free. I wonder where you learned Spanish, but if you can improve our Portuguese, we can help you with Spanish.

Do you see me?

Well, you're a middle-class dominated woman. You should liberate yourself first if you want to help migrant women. Don't forget to come to the migrants' demonstration on Sunday.

Do you see me?

You don't know Infinite? Or Exid? And you haven't watched any Korean drama. Why are you learning Korean?

Can you see me?

'Course, I can. You're my friend. The first one I had from the Humanist Movement. And now we're going to Cochabamba together because you'll become godmother of my son.

You don't see me.

Of course, I don't. I lived in Bom Retiro decades ago. Before you were born, I was already dead. But you keep asking me how I invented this Italianized language of mine. You wonder if I went crazy over an Italian lover, or if I used to drink together with Italian men at one of the corner bars of my time.

Do you see me?

Yes, unfortunately, yes, you are my neighbour. I do not like you or your partner, but certainly I will not say this to your face. I will instead turn off the electricity supply to your flat or hide your mail.

Can you see me?

Sometimes, I can see how Japanese you are, even though you say you don't know how to speak Japanese. Your kindness and commitment are very familiar to me. I was born in South Korea, but I feel I have a kind of Japanese character as well. You ask questions about my life and help me to learn Portuguese. I don't know how my life can help you in your research, but I like your company in our weekly meetings.

Do you see me?

Oh, I see you're very smart. You don't know how to speak Korean, but with English you can travel all over South Korea. South Korea is a modern country now.

And you, reader, what do you see?

7.4 MOBILITIES IN THE OPEN-ENDED CITY

As mentioned earlier, approaching the presence of international migrants in São Paulo through the notion of life-journeys revealed their existence as forms of mobility. Some of these life-journeys were guided by conceptions of ethnicity, some were not.

Those that elicited any kind of ethnic orientation did so in such singular ways that it also reflected the particular manner in which they traversed the city. Whereas Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee and Kitty resorted to senses of ethnic belonging in order to orientate their lives in the precarious and irregular urban environment they participate in, Julieta and Mr. Soh shaped a sense of ethnic belonging that covered their oscillating movement between a nationality of origin and the Brazilian-ness that their life-journeys increasingly incorporated.

The ethnicity evoked by Mr. Kwon and Mrs. Lee produced a material city based on bars and CCTV cameras, as the city was perceived as a highly dangerous space in which people of unknown intentions were constantly lurking. In assigning ethnicity to others, Mr. Kwon and Mrs. Lee tried to control the risks they believed São Paulo imposed upon them, attributing different degrees of moral qualities to the different nationalities they routinely stumbled across in the unstable dynamics of the businesses they were responsible for. Because they considered São Paulo to be such a menacing place, perhaps Mr. Kwon and Mrs. Lee restricted their own movements, avoiding having to circulate too much around the city.

In another fashion, Kitty relied on a sense of ethnicity that provided her with an impermanent network by which to navigate the informal and nebulous world of labour in the city centre of São Paulo. This network, grounded in a sense of Paraguayan-ness, matched considerably the criteria established by Mr. Kwon's and Mrs. Lee's conception of ethnicity, leading Kitty to work in the restaurant and the flower shop as employee. The contradictions of Kitty's network led her to unexpected experiences, such as pregnancy, which also changed the way she circulated in São Paulo, taking her to explore other parts of the city in the process of monitoring her gestation, by visiting different units of the public health care system.

Julieta, on the other hand, animated her sense of ethnicity through her activism in the migrants' social movements, investing it with the vocabulary of rights and citizenship in Brazil, and connecting it to familial and religious bonds from Quilacollo. As a public personality in São Paulo, she moved intensely around the city and beyond, meeting other migrants, visiting city council offices and public service units, and participating in events and demonstrations. Her pregnancy modified her itinerary within the city too. For Julieta, São Paulo was not considered a threatening place, but she understood that international migrants had to engage and invest politically with social movements to make the city accessible for themselves.

Regarding Mr. Soh, I was not able to follow him more closely in his routine in Bom Retiro and São Paulo. He lived in an apartment in Bom Retiro with his wife, who managed a small garment business in the neighbourhood as well. As a travel agent, Mr. Soh was used to organising tours for South Korean customers living in Brazil. In this way, Bom Retiro was the axis that connected him to many touristic settings in the world and, simultaneously, also led him back to South Korea from time to time. Similar to Kitty, Mr. Soh was involved in a Korean network in São Paulo that provided him with the necessary contacts to run his travel business, but his sense of Korean-ness encompassed the incongruities of experiencing transformations both in South Korea and in Brazil.

Within the visible particularities and variations contained in each life-journey, these senses of ethnicity sustained specific ways of living and making the city. The same can be said about the life-journeys of Liu and Helen, though they were not based on ethnic references.

Because of her strong belief in the right to wellbeing in a country historically based on a welfare model of public services, Liu conducted her stay in São Paulo as a temporary period. Her pregnancy and childbirth were the main aspects of her life linking her and her husband to the city, as childbirth would provide the Brazilian citizenship they believed would grant their entry to Europe. Therefore, Liu experienced São Paulo through her access to the health care system to which Liu had access, as well as through the documentation - notary office, officials and departments - that managed the status of foreigners in the country.

Alternatively, Helen and the openness of her 'way of thinking' made São Paulo a place where she was enlarging her experience of life by learning a new language, being upset with public services and landlords in Brazil, and continuing to exceed norms of Korean-ness. The city still held a provisional significance to her life, as her husband was applying for academic positions in Brazil and abroad, and therefore they were uncertain of their future.

São Paulo was the city that embraced all these different life-journeys simultaneously. In following each life-course, different aspects of the city were inhabited, activated and explored, making it manifold, a resource to the development of each trajectory.

7.5 FINDING YOUR OWN WAY IN THE CITY

In order to gain another sense of what ‘finding one’s way’ in São Paulo means I resort in this section to the experiences that some of the Spanish-speaking students shared with me during the Portuguese classes that I taught at a public school in Bom Retiro.

On 1 June 2014, the assignment was to bring a short text in Portuguese about the impressions each student had when arriving in São Paulo and about the places in the city they liked the most.

Corina, who was in her twenties and used to live in Cochabamba, Bolivia, wrote the following:

Quando eu cheguei pra Sau Paulo fiquei sorprendida demais porque hollé uma cidade muyto grande. As primeras veces que eu sai de casa a la rua me senti como uma formiga y alrededor de mi ficabam os prédios y eo sumi.²³⁸

Gilson, who was in his thirties and used to live in La Paz, Bolivia, gave a more dramatic twist:

Quando foi la primera vez ingrese ao Sao Paulo io senti como si estuviese em otro planeta. Al principio muto difícil, porque falan muito rápido y a la vez el tono de voz es alto.²³⁹

Luiz, who was in his twenties and was born in Arequipa, Peru, started his first sentence, but did not finish it:

Eu cheguei ou dia 1 de Agosto del 2013 a São Paulo. O primero q eu vi foi uma nebla. Eu lembro q al primer lugar que eu foi²⁴⁰

Adela Maria, who was in her thirties and used to live in La Paz, Bolivia, offered a different take:

Ao sair do terminal a primera impreção que teve foi que faltava ar, sera que foi porque era todo novo pra mim. As pessoas ollabam para mim como si estivesem frente a algo

²³⁸ Portuguese blended with Spanish, I tried to keep the way the sentences were written, though it may sound awkward: When I arrived to Sau Paulo I was too surprised because I saw a too big city. The first times I went out a la streets I felt like an ant and around mí there wore buildings and I vanished.

²³⁹ Portuguese blended with Spanish: When it was le first time I entered to Sao Paulo I felt like I was en another planet. El the beginning very difficult, because people spoke too fast and their voyce tone was too loud.

²⁴⁰ Portuguese blended with Spanish: I arrived om the 1 August del 2013 to São Paulo. The first thing dat I saw was mist. I remember dat el first place I went...

desconhecido, exquisito y não gostei de essa impreção. Tinha nesta cidade pra mim muito movimento de carros que corriam como locos.²⁴¹

In each of these pieces of writing, the act of arriving in São Paulo was an impactful and distressing experience. Unsettling images were evoked: being as tiny as an ant such that a place became disturbingly oversized; feeling so alien that the city was like another planet; being unable to see the city clearly through mist; not being able to breathe well in a place where people were resentful and cars were driven like mad. Certainly, the students perceived themselves as not being part of São Paulo.

However, in order to enumerate some of the places they liked in the city, they also described how they began to access São Paulo.

Corina:

Depois hasta dia de ojhe, eu giro alrededor de essa ciudade porque eu gosto muyto. Porque eu lembro muytas coisas boas de esa ciudad y Bom Retiro de onde quedan esas lembransas muyto boas y nao esqueço porque fasem parte de mí. Eu gosto de as praças, loyas, as quadras pra fazer esporche y todas as coisas que fican em Bom Retiro. Eu gosto de sua gente boa q se esta onde fico. Eu sento que Brasil-São Paulo-Bom Retiro fasem parte da minha historia de vida.²⁴²

Gilson:

Pasando el tempo eu foi acostumbrando e aprendiendo el Portugues, al tipo de comida. Agora eu ciento que estou em casa, conosco barios lugares que son muito bonitos conoser: Ribeirao Pires, Estação da Luz, Itapevi, que tein muito lugares com parques.²⁴³

Luiz:

Mais depois compreendi que as cosas eram iguaes só mudando a forma de falar. Tudo lo demais era igual. As casas – as ruas – as ceras – tudo era igual. A gente trabalha a gente briga a gente sorrie. Os lugares que mais gosté foi u Parque Ibirapuera que não cei vem onde que fica mas eu cei chegar. Y também São Francisco do Sul q não lembro bem mais ficaba em Santa Catarina. Era uma playa que no tenia muita gente isso era bom porque você podia ficar toda

²⁴¹ Portuguese blended with Spanish: When I left the terminal the first impressiom had was that I was breathless, could it be because everithing was new to me. People looked at me as they were en front of something unknown, strange, and I did not like this impressiom. There had in this city to me too much movement, cars that ran as mad.

²⁴² Portuguese blended with Spanish: Up two day, I go around this city because I like mucho. Because I remenber many good things of this city and Bom Retiro where theze memories lie and I do not forget them because they are part of me. I like the parcs, estores, the sport courts and everything in Bom Retiro. I like its good people dat live where I stay. I fill that Brazil-São Paulo-Bom Retiro are part of mi life history.

²⁴³ Portuguese blended with Spanish: As time goes bye, I got used to and learned Portuguese, the food. Now I feel I am at home, I know mani places dat are nice to know: Ribeirao Pires, Luz estation, Itapevi, where there are places with parks.

tarde centado olhando u mar, sim que ninguém te incomodasse. A... isso era tam bom. Y agora eu tó aqui em São Paulo, trabalhando.²⁴⁴

In order to find her own way in São Paulo, Corina continued to move around the neighbourhood and the city. In visiting new places and turning them into memories, she made 'Brazil-São Paulo-Bom Retiro' become part of her life history. Gilson, in turn, considered that it was important to learn Portuguese and appreciate the local food to be successful in making São Paulo his home. Differently, Luiz learned that people and places can be the same, once one recognises oneself as being part of the 'jente' (peeple). The different places through which each of these students moved around São Paulo equally coincided with the intense mobility previously discussed in the life-journeys of my main research participants.

São Paulo is a city that requires effort from visitors and newcomers to find their bearings. It requires persistence and a bit of imagination from its residents, for them to insert and animate a life of their own in the city.

7.6 THE GAMBIARRA CITY

The life-journeys portrayed in this ethnography evince how life-in-the-making substantiates the making of the city itself. Through Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta, Mr. Soh, Liu, Helen and some of the Spanish-speaking students of Portuguese, Bom Retiro and São Paulo were places lived with different points of arrival and departure, connected abroad by the specific characteristics of each life-journey. It is admirable that such different trajectories found their own ways in the city, whether through assumptions of ethnicity or not, whether through stories of love or not, through feelings of success or not, whether through sentiments of hope or not. In being able to appreciate these lives in their own terms, I am able to appreciate a city with 'faces', a city ingraining the making of people's lives.

São Paulo has been an inexhaustible object of study. There is a convergent observation that the city of São Paulo has gone through numerous large-scale demographic changes over the last decades. For instance, São Paulo is no longer the Brazil's top destination for internal migration. This century, the city has been losing some of its inhabitants to medium-sized cities located in the interior of the state of São Paulo and its population growth has been decelerated. In relation to international movements, São Paulo has gained a particular position in the country by receiving moderate contingents of immigrants from all over the world at the same time that Brazil has turned into an origin of international emigration too (Baeninger 2011). As the heart of a metropolitan area, São Paulo

²⁴⁴ Portuguese blended with Spanish: Later I understood things were the same everywhere just changing names. Everithing was the same. The houses – the streets – the kerbz. Everything was the same. Peeple work, peeple fight, peeple smile. The places I liked the most was Ibirapuera Park dat I do not knou where it is but I knou how to get there. Also São Francisco do Sul dat I do not knou exactly but it was in Santa Catarina. It was a beech dat did not have many people this was good because you could stay the hole afternoon sat looking at the sea, no one to disturb you. Ah... this was good. Now I'm here in São Paulo, working.

has been creating new 'centralities' beyond the historical city centre that consecutively expressed the socioeconomic conflicts and negotiations in progress within the city (Frúgoli 2000). Thus, the city has gained new reference points around Paulista and Juscelino Kubitschek Avenues, signalling the different economic engagements undertaken in the city and the re-arrangement of notions of modernity at play. Considering a global scenario, the restructuring conditions of flexible accumulation have not transformed the city into a post-industrial conformation based largely on services. Instead, São Paulo has become the place that has accumulated both industrial and high-valued service functions, spreading its influence across extensive areas in Brazil and consolidating its position as a command centre and hub connected to production systems worldwide (Comin 2011).

Within these macro-processes of transformation, a city of 'inequality', 'disjunctions' and 'ambiguity' has been brought to light by contemporary studies. São Paulo has turned into a highly segregated place in which the different classes exist spatially and socially apart from each other: the upper-middle classes live in the comfortable enclaves of gated condominiums, while the lower classes subsist in precarious settlements in the suburbs or next to the enclosed complexes (Caldeira 2000). In this urban setting, the city centre has lost its prominence as a vital element for the city's dynamics, being re-appropriated by lower-class workers in forms of precarious housing (Kowarick 2011), or by 'unwanted' subjects in their circulation in the area, such as crack users (Frúgoli and Spaggiari 2010; Rui 2012). In this city, urban interventions in the central area have been prone to leading to processes of gentrification (Frúgoli and Sklair 2009), and violence came to be entrenched in the routine of every inhabitant, whether he or she was involved in organised crime or not (Miraglia 2008), reinforcing the existing forms of inequality.

Yet, it is in the struggles to claim housing and urban structure in this highly segregated city that citizenship has been made possible. In the self-constructing peripheral areas, groups of residents transformed their 'illegal' and precarious dwelling at the edge of the city limits into homes. In a disjunctive democracy in which formal rights do not secure people's participation in a common political and social order with basic living standards, 'citizenship' still has a role in the highly unequal setting (Holston 2008).

In this segregated and disjunctive city, people tend to be identified according to their position in the privileged or the disadvantaged part of the city, characterised by an invariable identity that expresses their respective stationary social location within the divided city.

For a different set of studies, these transformations did not offer any possibility of redemption, because the city of São Paulo as a political project from the 1970s had faded away. The local social movements, which were organised around claims to have access to urban housing and urban facilities such as sanitation, electricity, paved roads and sidewalks, etc., and were considered decisive to constitute the working classes as political actors, have faded due to the reorganisation of economic production that removed labour as a core reference in contemporary life. In dismantling the structures of a Fordist model, there only remains the oscillation or 'shuffling' between the statuses of legal and the illegal in precarious labour arrangements (Telles 2006) and the overlapping of the normative orders of the state and organised crime in the peripheral neighbourhoods (Feltran 2011). It is in these forms of ambiguity that new urban processes in São Paulo reside. Further exploring the

significances of this new state of affairs, attention has been paid to people's mobility uncovering new social connections for explaining the new configurations embedding São Paulo as a city (Telles 2010). Within this urban context, and without the Fordist standards warranting stable production and labour conditions, people and organisations made use of all sorts of resources to keep producing or working, even holding on to what were considered 'informal' or 'illegal' practices, such as alternative provision of public transport, or structured operations within drug businesses. Only by following some individual trajectories in these particular situations could the connections between the legal and the illegal, the official and the unofficial, be disclosed.

Regarding the presence of international migrants in São Paulo, the attention to people's mobility also offered elucidations beyond the usual victimisation of migrants as 'illegal workers' in the city, humanising them through their trajectories. Souchard (2011) and Rolnik (2010) discuss how the migratory project of Bolivians, Paraguayans and Peruvians involved in the garment industry in São Paulo prompted both physical and occupational mobilities within it. In the highly flexible dynamics of the garment industry, international migrants considered their work in the sector as a transitory stage that could open up better opportunities for them in the future. After moving through positions such as sewing assistant and sewing operator, some of these migrants found occasions to manage their own sewing units. Usually, this decision included moving from the central areas to more distant neighbourhoods in search of lower rental prices for their businesses. Although the conditions of entrepreneurship might be precarious and implicated in informal systems of work relations, the opportunity was seen as worthwhile because the precarity was deemed temporary in the context of long-term migratory projects.

It is in the emphasis on people's mobility and the discussion of the contemporary presence of international migrants in São Paulo that the approach I have taken through life-journeys finds convergence. However, my thesis has highlighted migrants' mobilities in São Paulo and beyond not as patterns determined by certain structural conditions but as existential processes that imbue the city with singular and unfinished subjectivities. In their movement to fulfil dreams, hopes or projects, these subjectivities face daily struggles and predicaments, and these individual and personal itineraries are a crucial part of the making of São Paulo as well. Alongside the 'segregated and disjunctive city', or the 'city of ambiguities', the life-journeys delineated in the thesis revealed São Paulo as a plastic place where people are able to circulate within the city, beyond the unequal distribution of urban resources and rights, making connections of different sorts according to the particular life-goals and experiences that propel their mobilities.

As the poetics of resonance has made clear, people's subjectivities are permeated by moments of inarticulate states that can convey puzzlement, surprise or confusion in the face of unforeseen events, revealing how open, in fact, life is. Norms of ethnicity and kinship, laws of nationality, conditions of social and economic inequality – these can restrict or enlarge someone's life-options, but certainly *they do not define them imperatively*. In this way, the making of the city through these subjectivities is also an open-ended endeavour: it is an exploration and a risk at the same time.

In following people's courses throughout the city and beyond, São Paulo became for me, as ethnographer, a resourceful space that accommodated, sheltered or embraced life expectations of

different sorts. It is undoubtedly a difficult, unequal and unstable environment, but it is by the same token a city fortuitously open to disparate life-journeys and life-projects that sometimes are bound together and at other times are completely unaware of one another. In the lives depicted here, Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee and Kitty had their trajectories knotted in the precariousness and informality of work relations in the city, while Julieta, Mr. Soh, Liu and Helen had routes that did not intersect one another at any point during my fieldwork.

The city that was lived through these life-journeys could not be totally grasped and defined, because it was a city of potentialities, for better or for worse. It was a city that is materialised only when it was prompted and challenged by virtue of people's agency and resourcefulness. In this way, São Paulo was a boundless city that was discovered and re-discovered at every enactment experienced in it, through catchwords or through life-journeys. It was a city that could be left when solutions for one's existence were exhausted, exemplified by Kitty's return to Paraguay. And it was a city that could inspire very different hopes and dreams, such as Julieta's claims for migrant women's wellbeing and Liu's reveries of a good life in Europe.

Referring to recent transformations in Latin American cities like São Paulo, Peixoto (2009) proposes that we think of Latin American megacities as urban formlessnesses associated with processes of globalization. In scenarios of abandoned areas of de-industrialisation and the prominent presence of nomadic characters such as the homeless person, the street peddler, the slum dweller and the migrant who occupies the interstices of the urban space, any visual cartographic model becomes insufficient to account for the overlapping scales at play. According to Peixoto, the volume of heterogeneous processes of megacities requires new ways to apprehend it. Megacities in Latin America cannot be comprehended anymore by their physical form, by their objects (streets, monuments, sanitation, etc.). Here is 'foremost a field of moving forces and continuous organization' (Peixoto 2009:244). The city is therefore to be considered formless because its nature and character rely on events that continually induce new configurations rather than on any collection of fixed urban objects.

Recognising Peixoto's proposition of urban formlessness as an invitation to appreciate the Latin American city as an existential and phenomenological experience containing contradictory aspects of instability and openness, I suggest that São Paulo can best be understood as a 'gambiarra' city. 'Gambiarra' is a colloquial word in Portuguese usually referring to improvised solutions with existing scarce resources. In the online Urban Dictionary, 'gambiarra' is defined as: "A Brazilian expression. It basically means to use improvised methods/solutions to solve a problem, with any available material. English equivalents would include "McGyverism", "Kludge", "Quick Fix", "Alternative Engineering", "Workaround", and so on"²⁴⁵.

This idea of 'gambiarra' is in close dialogue with Lévi-Strauss's notion of 'bricolage'. For Lévi-Strauss (1966), 'bricolage' is a mode of knowledge that, like 'science', possesses a speculative organisation to explore nature, providing forms of classification and understandings of the world. However, bricolage, unlike science, finds answers for the tasks it is confronted with by working within

²⁴⁵ Available on <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Gambiarra>. Accessed on 27/04/16.

a limited repertoire at hand. Opposed to the 'scientist', the figure of the 'bricoleur' does not reach an understanding of the world through a scientific project, and does not work in terms of concepts. The 'bricoleur' refers to a 'collection of left overs from human endeavour' (Lévi-Strauss 1966:19), 'using the remains and debris of events' (Lévi-Strauss 1966:22). While 'science' arrives at events by means of structures embodied in hypotheses and theories, the 'bricoleur' begins with 'remains of events' to build up structures.

The idea of 'gambiarra' benefits from the notion of 'bricolage' not only for its 'make it up as one goes along' aspect, but also for its quality of operating within the 'logics of sign'. As Lévi-Strauss stresses, 'science' makes use of concepts, whereas the 'bricoleur', of signs.

... whereas concepts aim to be wholly transparent with respect to reality, signs allow and even require the interposing and incorporation of a certain amount of human culture into reality (1966:20)

In this way, signs are obscure and are never sufficient in themselves, they are continuously directing their significance to successive relations with other entities, being permutable and situationally meaningful. In working through this sort of process, 'bricolage' becomes an act of understanding that does not aim at fully explaining everything in the world. Quite the reverse, its way of reasoning is a provisional and unstable one, always on-the-move, building up worlds that will be shattered again, only to give way to new worlds that will be built from its fragments (Lévi-Strauss 1966:22). The idea of 'gambiarra' as a proposition to understand cities through people's life-journeys is inspired by this property of Lévi-Strauss's bricolage: the awareness that a world might be composed of multiple attempts to create a life within the available resources of the world, an awareness that also understands the world not through a well-defined concept but through the process of life-making in itself – which, as it had already been asserted in previous sections, is highly impermanent and unsteady.

A graphic representation of what 'gambiarra' might be:



Figure 1 - 'Gambiarra' on electricity post in Bom Retiro. Simone Toji- 2014

The picture above was taken from the balcony of the apartment where I lived in in Bom Retiro. It clearly shows the discrepancy between the antiquated material structure of the district and the expanding services of electricity, cable TV and internet that are part of the contemporary life of its residents. The old buildings were not adapted to incorporate the bundles of cables of the modern world, and the neighbourhood did not undergo general adjustments for underground cable servicing. Thus, improvised and unexpected wire connections took form in order to bridge the structural disjunctures. These, actually, are not illegal cable attachments, as it is usually assumed in many images of electric 'gambiarra's in Brazil²⁴⁶.

The 'illegal' sense of 'gambiarra' informs, for instance, notions in the social sciences such as 'gambiarra jurídica'²⁴⁷ (Hirata 2012 and Telles 2013), which defines an appropriation of the law by actors that would not be supposed to operate within it, but use legal discourses in specific situations of emergency or exception. The 'gambiarra jurídica' becomes a mechanism in the local power games that relate to the presence of illicit global forces in the city, such as players in the trade of counterfeit goods, or in the drug business.

Apart from the much stressed illegal side of the expression 'gambiarra', I would like to place the emphasis on a constructive and malleable sense it brings to discussing São Paulo and its contemporary embeddedness in a worldwide dynamic – so apparent when considering the life-journeys of contemporary international migrants. Certain aspects of illegality and informality were substantiated in the life-journeys of Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty and Liu in São Paulo, but what makes these lives human (and humane) documents, together with the other life-journeys outlined, is necessarily the way each of them found it possible to live in São Paulo in their own terms so as to undertake their own struggles. This plasticity of the city, as Peixoto's formlessness suggests, is not given by the availability of urban objects, but by the phenomenology of multiple events, such as the events each life-journey was compelled to enact.

The 'gambiarra' city is the substantiation of a 'city with faces'. In this ethnographic experiment, 'faces' emerged through my engagement with the life-courses of some of the international migrants that I met in the city of São Paulo. Through these involvements, Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta, Mr. Soh, Liu and Helen became the 'faces' that revealed São Paulo as a highly malleable city that opened itself up to the accomplishment of very different life-journeys. I was able to respect the uniqueness of each life-course by admitting the limits of my understanding of people's lives. In resorting to a poetics of resonance, I established an alternative way to engage with those lives, not through the standards of objective knowledge, but through the recognition of another human existence through a phenomenological attitude. I built this alternative path by letting my own experiences resonate according to people's experiences in order to recognise another person's being

²⁴⁶ Pictures of electric 'gambiarra's have achieved iconic status in general. They are usually taken from highly precarious areas such as from suburban districts or shantytowns so as to provide illustration of deficient urbanisation and service piracy by the media.

²⁴⁷ Portuguese: legal gambiarra.

in his or her potentialities and liabilities. Once this approach was adopted, São Paulo also became a city of potentialities, beyond the conventional fixities that regard cities as well-defined entities.

As a 'gambiarra' city, São Paulo has never been a resolved city, and, in its incompleteness and failure to be coherent and intelligible, it offers itself as potentiality. Potentiality to allow people from all walks of life and all parts of the globe to find their own way in the city. Potentiality to intermittently exceed lawfulness and become highly unstable, delivering flashes of violence and a general sentiment of bewilderment. In the 'gambiarra' city, there will be always a dimension that may be unreachable and unconceivable until one risks trying it.

In the porousness and ambiguity of the 'gambiarra' city, one can glimpse the segregated space shaped by the life-journeys of Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee and Kitty, or the transnational city animated by Julieta's and Mr. Soh's in their oscillating movement between São Paulo and their places of origin. In the 'gambiarra' city, one can also sense a hint of the cosmopolitan city brought to life by the life-journeys of Liu and Helen with their ironical attitudes and their practices of ambiguation towards conceptions of nationality-cum-ethnicity.

Although malleability is a key aspect of the 'gambiarra' city, it is not always 'soft' as Raban (1998) describes it. For Raban, a city has a softness manifested by the heterogeneous lives that its inhabitants inscribe on the textures and soundings of an urban setting. The nature and character of the city comes to be expressed through the creative engagement its numerous inhabitants cause themselves to have with on it. In contrast, the malleability of the 'gambiarra city' can at times be rough, as expectations and imagined solutions can be upset by unexpected interferences, such as when Helen gave up attending Portuguese classes because of the subway construction interruptions on Sundays; or when Liu delayed her imagined exit from Brazil after she learned that she would have to prepare for the Portuguese test in order to get a Brazilian passport; or when Kitty went back to Paraguay because neither she or her new partner were able to find jobs after the birth of their child. Sometimes the malleability of the 'gambiarra' city is not found to be exactly as it was once conceived. So, this city is not 'soft' in the sense that the situatedness of each life-course does not allow insubstantial propositions to be easily accomplished. There are particulars and positionalities grounding each specific existence. Still, the 'gambiarra' city continues to be plastic in a 'rough' way, because a life is challenged to be creative and activate its agency in order to find ways to live in the city, as Jackson (2015) proposes in the notion of 'limitrophe': the constraints that should be overcome in order to make someone feel alive. This is the reason why the 'gambiarra' city is animated through a continuous process of engagement and, in this sense, is not a finished object.

In paying attention to people's life-courses, a city 'with faces' is enlivened through the process of making a life or lives. Thus, the urban space only makes sense intertwined with people's trajectories, vivifying specific places because of very particular conceptions and needs. No one lives a city in general, because it is not possible to be a general presence in attendance at all points at once. A city is made alive through the multiple and specific engagements its inhabitants are able to establish with it, sometimes in unanticipated ways.

The unpredictability of the 'gambiarra' city emphasises even more the significance of the minute and singular elements involved in the making of the city. As Agier (2009) proposes, '*faire ville*',

the making-of-the-city is not an object, it is a situated and microscopic process; an anthropology of the city does justice to this making by embracing its fluidity (as against 'softness'), de-centring analysis from a focus on essences to one on lived situations. *The making-of-the-city, then, comprises necessarily the multiple ways of making-the-city.*

In this sense, a 'gambiarra' city requires persistent agency and creativity from its inhabitants, because its inconstancy and precarity make the urban environment 'rough'. However, the solutions created by each life-journey in the city is testimony that there will be startling ways to make life keep going in it or beyond.

São Paulo as the 'gambiarra' city revealed by the life-journeys portrayed in this ethnography is not the expression of an urban model, it is simply a city-in-action.

AND THEN...

At the end of this ethnographic journey, I have chosen to reinforce ideas that are spread throughout the thesis and bring them together in an attempt to gather momentum.

In not achieving any overarching explanation from the experiences of my fieldwork, I took seriously the responsibility to 'do justice' to the 'mystery' I found in people, places and situations. This mystery was imbued in the subtle aspects of the lives of the international migrants I followed, especially in those fleeting moments of inarticulacy that revealed to me how life could be an unstable and uncertain venture. I found in Levinas an inspirational body of work that allowed me to explore the possibility of holding mystery as an integral element to be acknowledged for research purposes. At the same time, Levinas's body of work offered me a way to execute a feasible ethnographic experiment that held mystery as a core concern through the notion of the other's 'uniqueness'.

Upon this core theoretical reference, mystery was methodologically incorporated by the determination not to impose social categorisations as starting points for the research project - and by tailoring a phenomenological approach that allowed imagination to integrate the ephemeral part of people's lives as noticeable ethnographic information. Although vague and unreliable, the 'poetics of resonance' worked as a textual attendance to those inchoate moments experienced (by me and also, I sensed, by them) in the lives of the research participants, signalling the limitations of any scientific

approach in knowing everything about a subject, and indicating how those lives were fragile in themselves, as specific occurrences were able to disturb each of them, whether or not reliance was made on notions of ethnicity, nationality, kinship, or citizenship.

Simultaneously, in avoiding setting up an approach grounded on forms of 'totalisation', as Levinas calls the expressions of extreme systematisation in thought, whether 'cultural' (mythical) or rational, this study was inspired by Levinas' concept of 'uniqueness', transmuting it ethnographically into the idea of 'life-journey'. By unfolding the experiences of Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta, Mr. Soh, Liu and Helen through the notion of life-journeys, the singularity of their existences was enlivened. The life-journeys of this account indicated in varied ways how a life considered through the experiences lived in series of events in particular times and places is susceptible to all sorts of incongruities and contrarities. In order to acknowledge these inconsistencies and contingencies as part of the process of making life, I crafted a 'poetics of resonance' in order to put these into relief.

These procedures contest the assumptions of a scientific standard based mostly on operations of objectivation and generalisation: it is my hope that, after appreciating the singular lives elucidated in this ethnography, I might persuade the reader that it is worth attempting an alternative way of doing anthropology in order to reach a different appreciation of the human in the world.

This appreciation, based on the proposed approach, offered some insights concerning migration and urban studies.

In all the life-journeys I have recounted, compelling renditions were given by the individuals concerned to explain how life should be understood and conducted. The life-journeys of Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta and Mr. Soh were mostly based on assumptions of ethnic belonging. Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee and Kitty created their lives within the restricted boundaries of their respective nationalities-cum-ethnicity, while Julieta and Mr. Soh shaped their courses by circulating between the references of their nationality of origin and a certain Brazilian-ness. In contrast, Liu and Helen developed their own personal explanations of their trajectories. For each of them, in facing a disturbing occurrence, each life-journey resorted to notions of nationality-cum-ethnicity, metaphors or personal theorising in order to deal with the imponderability of life.

Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee and Kitty strived to keep the unity of their existences through ethnicity-cum-nationality. Mr. Kwon and Mrs. Lee recurrently stated their affiliation as Koreans, while Kitty asserted her belonging as Paraguayan. They preferred to operate within the fixity of only one national reference, while Julieta, Mr. Soh, Liu and Helen moved around multiplicities. But the multiplicity experienced in the in-be(ing)tween journeys offered different prospects from the journeys of becoming. This difference between the in-be(ing)tween journeys and the journeys of becoming is correspondent with the difference between the notions of 'campo de possibilidades'²⁴⁸ (Velho 1987 and 1994) and 'capacities' (Rapport 2010). The notion of 'campo de possibilidades' refers to opportunities already defined in a possible range of choices, while the idea of 'capacities' provides the possibility for someone to build his or her own choices in his or her own terms. Along these lines, whereas the life-journeys of Julieta and Mr. Soh connected senses of Bolivian-ness and Brazilian-ness,

²⁴⁸ Portuguese: field of possibilities

and Korean-ness and Brazilian-ness respectively, finding a multiple and wider range of possibilities within these national-cum-ethnic references, the life-journeys of Liu and Helen encouraged them to experiment with new ways of being beyond the standards of being Chinese, Korean, Japanese or Brazilian. Whereas Julieta and Mr. Soh lived the multiplicity of their trajectories as a 'campo de possibilidades', Liu and Helen experimented with their multiplicity as expressions of their capacities to create new ways of reasoning about life.

Subjectively, their journeys-of-being revealed the continuous efforts spent by Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee and Kitty to keep perceiving themselves, as Koreans or as Paraguayan, respectively. Differently, Julieta and Mr. Soh lived the drama of oscillating between multiple references of ethnicity-cum-nationality, while Liu and Helen, ventured to understand themselves beyond the allusions to ethnicity-cum-nationality and experimented with processes to allow themselves to enlarge their selves as immensities.

These life-processes, thus, reflected the different manners in which each life-journey configured senses of the self in immensity. In holding themselves up to national-cum-ethnic references of belonging, Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta and Mr. Soh anchored their life-journeys to collective notions of ethnicity. While Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee and Kitty struggled to retain the unity of their national-cum-ethnic identities, Julieta and Mr. Soh alternated between the references of Bolivian-ness and Brazilian-ness or Korean-ness and Bolivian-ness respectively, affirming a Bolivian self experienced in Brazilian-ness or a Korean self experienced in Brazilian-ness. Alternatively, in generating their own justifications for living beyond the categories of national-cum-ethnic categorizations, Liu and Helen afforded themselves the opportunity of producing an open-ended sense of themselves through the potentialities of their immensities. In this way, this ethnography can also be considered partly an ethnography of cosmopolitanism, as proposed by Wardle, an ethnography that 'amount[s] to an emergent view of cosmopolitan personhood-in-the-making (or perhaps in some cases unmaking)' (2012:505).

In the context of migration studies, this ethnographic venture has found that ethnicity and nationality are not the only references constituting migrants' lives. They can be central to some, as it was evidenced in the lives of Mr. Kwon, Mr. Lee, Kitty, Julieta and Mr. Soh, but ethnicity and nationality are not sufficient references in themselves. At times, people migrate precisely as an attempt to overcome standards and norms based on ethnicity or nationality, as was the case in Liu's and Helen's trajectories.

In eschewing an approach to the lives of international migrants living in São Paulo through pre-ordained social categorisations, the life-courses of all of my research participants gained enough thickness to show that no norms or categories of ethnicity, nationality, kinship, or citizenship—as though social facts—could assure them a life without uncertainty, risk, decision and tribulation. In following their experiences as life-journeys, these categories have been shown to be contradictorily lived, as they were constantly questioned by each new event in their trajectories.

Furthermore, each life-journey expressed a very singular incarnation of the capacity each person possessed to enliven a life, allowing anthropology to approach the human as ethnographic

densities. However, in their singularity, all trajectories also evidenced the aspect of being open-ended, as no categorisation could guarantee any certainty for the future.

In questioning 'categorisation thinking' in migration studies, a new sense of complexity emerged, following Levinas's notions of 'uniqueness' and 'mystery'. From this new sense of complexity, the idea of multiplicity could be re-configured. This allowed for thinking of identities as 'immensities': a denomination for subjectivities that could contain contradictions and ambiguities in themselves, holding capacities to deal with the unknown and unexpected of the world, therefore, being open-ended and incomplete.

In regards to urban studies, understanding the city of São Paulo through the life-journeys of Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta, Mr. Soh, Liu and Helen offered the opportunity to reconfigure questions of territory and ethnicity in the city. Realising that the mentioned life-journeys manifested themselves in São Paulo as mobilities, no necessary connection between urban spaces - such as neighbourhoods - and ethnicity was discovered as an expression of the presence of international migrants in the city. Ethnicity in the city of São Paulo was brought into being as catchwords in the brief encounters between strangers and in the life-in-the-making of some of the life-journeys portrayed. When concentrating on the life-in-the-making of these life-journeys, São Paulo was conceived of as a plastic urban environment that can accommodate such divergent life-courses, which at times met one another, and at other times completely ignored each other. In reference to this capacity, I suggested defining São Paulo as a 'gambiarra city', highlighting its aspect of being a city of improvisation, a resource to be activated or de-activated in different ways according to the different life-trajectories.

This ethnographic experiment is flagrantly limited and imperfect. It does not offer substantial perspectives to explain larger aggregates of human relationships. This may be a challenge to be undertaken in future research projects: to reach understanding of larger scales of human involvements without losing track of the singularity that each life enlivens in the world.

As a matter of fact, the ultimate value of this ethnography lies in its refusal to reduce human lives to general schemes in which one cannot identify 'faces' anymore. The efforts applied here manifest the attempt to create an anthropology that is able to acknowledge the richness of what is to live a life through thick and thin, recognising what uniqueness means.

Levinas writes: 'the uniqueness of the unique *signifies* in love' (Levinas 1998:167). This ethnography is my way of *loving* Mr. Kwon, Mrs. Lee, Kitty, Julieta, Mr. Soh, Liu and Helen, since the poetics of resonance is a form of 'loving' engagement beyond objective knowledge.

I wish every research project were like those journeys in which you expect to reach a place, but suddenly you find yourself lost. Then, you realise that you do not want to go to that first place after all, but you do not know where else to head. You keep traveling, stopping over at different sites, until, without prior notice, you arrive at a place where you feel that the journey finally ends. And you finish that journey in silence. I wish every research journey were seen to be worthy in themselves simply because of the act of risking to travel, not because of its results.

I wish I could finish this ethnographic endeavour in silence, letting the possible meanings of the experience float. I wish I could find a place in anthropology where I would not have to prove anything, but only be truthful to the people I met on my way and the experiences I went through. Because when I look back, the eyes in people's faces would be enough to assure me that it was all worth living. I wish for a science that could embrace incompleteness and could stand without conclusions.

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